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ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

POLITICAL JUSTICE,

AND

ITS INFLUENCE

ON

MORALS AND HAPPINESS.

BY

WILLIAM GODWIN.

FIRST AMERICAN FROM THE SECOND LONDON EDITION CORRECTED.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY BIOREN AND MADAN.

1796.

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PREFACE.

FEW works of literature are held to be of more general uſe, than thoſe which treat in a methodical and elementary way of the principles of ſcience. But the human mind in every enlightened age is progreſſive; and the beſt elementary treatiſes after a certain time are reduced in their value by the operation of ſubſequent diſcoveries. Hence it has always been deſired by candid enquirers, that new works of this kind ſhould from time to time be brought forward, including the improvements, which had not yet been realiſed at the time that former compilations upon the ſame ſubject were produced.

It would be ſtrange if ſomething of this kind were not deſirable in the ſcience of politics, after the conculſion that the minds of men have ſuffered upon this ſubject, and the materials that have been furniſhed, by the recent experiments of America and France. A ſenſe of the value of ſuch a work, if properly executed, was the motive which gave birth to theſe volumes.

Authors who have formed the deſign of ſupplying the defects of their predeceſſors, will be found, if they were in any degree equal to the taſk, not merely to have collected the ſcattered information that had been produced upon the ſubject, but to have increaſed the ſcience with the fruit of their own meditations. In the following work principles will occaſionally occur, which it will not be juſt to reject without examination, merely upon the ground of their apparent novelty. It was impoſſible perſeveringly to reflect upon ſo pro-

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RARE BOOKS

lific a ſcience, and a ſcience which may be ſaid to be yet in its infancy, without being led into ways of thinking that were in ſome degree uncommon.

Another argument in favour of the utility of ſuch a work was frequently in the author's mind, and therefore ought to be mentioned. He conceived politics to be the proper vehicle of a liberal morality. That diſcription of ethics will be found perhaps to be worthy of ſlight eſtimation, which confines itſelf to petty detail and the offices of private life, inſtead of leading men to conſider themſelves principally under the relation in which they ſtand to the whole body of mankind. It appeared ſufficiently practicable to make of ſuch a treatiſe, excluſively of its direct political uſe, an advantageous vehicle of moral improvement. The author was accordingly deſirous of producing a work from the peruſal of which no man ſhould riſe, without being ſtrengthened in habits of ſincerity, fortitude and juſtice.

Having ſtated the conſiderations in which the work originated, it is proper to mention a few circumſtances of the outline of its hiſtory. It was projected in the month of May 1791 : the compoſition was begun in the following September, and has therefore occupied a ſpace of ſixteen months. This period was for the moſt part devoted to the purpoſe with unuſual ardour. It were to be wiſhed it had been longer ; but the ſtate of the public mind and of the general intereſts of the ſpecies, operated as a ſtrong argument in favour of an early publication.

The printing of the following treatiſe, as well as the compoſition, was influenced by the ſame principle, a deſire to reconcile a certain degree of diſpatch with the neceſſary deliberation. The printing was for that reaſon commenced, long before the compoſition was finiſhed. Some diſadvantages have ariſen from this circumſtance. The ideas of the author became more perſpicuous and digeſted, as his enquiries advanced. The longer he conſidered the ſubject, the more clearly

he ſeemed to underſtand it. This circumſtance has led him into ſome inaccuracies of language and reaſoning, particulary in the earlier part of the work, reſpecting the properties and utility of government. He did not enter upon the ſubject, without being aware that government by its very nature counteracts the improvement of individual intellect; but, as the views he entertains in this particular are out of the common road, it is ſcarcely to be wondered at, that he underſtood the propoſition more completely as he proceeded, and ſaw more diſtinctly into the nature of the remedy. This defect, together with ſome others, might, under a different mode of preparation, have been avoided. The judicious reader will make a ſuitable allowance. The author judges upon a review, that the errors are not ſuch as eſſentially to affect the object of the work, and that more has been gained than loſt by the conduct he has purſued*.

In addition to what is here ſtated it may not be uſeleſs to diſcribe the progreſs by which the author's mind was led to its preſent ſentiments. They are by no means the ſuggeſtions of a ſudden effervescence of fancy. Political enquiry had long held a principal place in the writer's attention. It is now twelve years ſince he became ſatisfied, that monarchy was a ſpecies of government eſſentially corrupt. He owed this conviction to the political writings of Swift and to a peruſal of the Latin hiſtorians. Nearly at the ſame time he derived great additional inſtruction from the moſt conſiderable French writers upon the nature of man, which he read in the following order, *Syſtême de la Nature*, Rouſſeau and Helvetius. Long before he thought of the preſent work, he had familiariſed his mind to the ſpeculations ſuggeſted in it reſpecting juſtice, gratitude, rights of man, promiſes, oaths and the omnipotence of opinion. Of the deſirableneſs of

* *The defects here alluded to, have been attempted to be rectified in the ſecond edition.*

a government in the utmoſt degree ſimple he was not made fully aware, but by ideas ſuggeſted by the French revolution. To the ſame event he owes the determination of mind which gave exiſtence to this work.

The period in which the work makes its appearance is ſingular. The people of England have aſſiduouſly been excited to declare their loyalty, and to mark every man as obnoxious who is not ready to ſign the Shibboleth of the conſtitution. Money is raiſed by voluntary ſubſcription to defray the expence of proſecuting men who ſhall dare to promulgate heretical opinions, and thus to oppreſs them at once with the authority of government and the reſentment of individuals. This was an accident wholly unforeſeen when the work was undertaken; and it will ſcarcely be ſuppoſed that ſuch an accident could produce any alteration in the writer's deſigns. Every man, if we may believe the voice of rumour, is to be proſecuted, who ſhall appeal to the people by the publication of any unconſtitutional paper or pamphlet; and it is added, that men are to be puniſhed for any unguarded words that may be dropped in the warmth of converſation and debate*. It is now to be tried whether, in addition to theſe alarming encroachments upon our liberty, a book is to fall under the arm of the civil power, which, beſide the advantage of having for one of its expreſs objects the diſſuading from tumult and violence, is by its very nature an appeal to men of ſtudy and reflection. It is to be tried whether an attempt ſhall be made to ſuppreſs the activity of mind, and put an end to the diſquiſitions of ſcience. Reſ-

* *The firſt conviction of this kind, which the author was far from imagining to be ſo near, was of a journeyman tallow-chandler, January 8, 1793, who, being ſhown the regalia at the Tower, was proved to have vented a coarſe expreſſion againſt royalty to the perſon that exhibited them.*

pecting the event in a perſonal view the author has formed his reſolution. Whatever conduct his countrymen may purſue, they will not be able to ſhake his tranquillity. The duty he conceives himſelf moſt bound to diſcharge, is the aſſiſting the progreſs of truth; and, if he ſuffer in any reſpect for ſuch a proceeding, there is certainly no viciſſitude that can befal him, that can ever bring along with it a more ſatisfactory conſolation.

But, excluſively of this precarious and unimportant conſideration, it is the fortune of the preſent work to appear before a public that is panic ſtruck, and impreſſed with the moſt dreadful apprehenſions reſpecting ſuch doctrines as are here delivered. All the prejudices of the human mind are in arms againſt it. This circumſtance may appear to be of greater importance than the other. But it is the property of truth to be fearleſs, and to prove victorious over every adverſary. It requires no great degree of fortitude, to look with indifference upon the falſe fire of the moment, and to foreſee the calm period of reaſon which will ſucceed.

LONDON:

JANUARY 7, 1793.

PREFACE

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE reception of the following work has been such as to exceed what the author dared to promise himself. Its principles and reasonings have obtained the attention of the public to a considerable extent. This circumstance he has construed as imposing upon him the duty of a severe and assiduous revisal. Every author figures to himself, while writing, a numerous and liberal attention to his lucubrations; if he did not believe that he had something to offer that was worthy of public notice, it is impossible that he should write with any degree of animation. But the most ardent imagination can scarcely be expected to come in competition with sense. In the present instance there are many things that now appear to the author upon a review, not to have been meditated with a sufficiently profound reflection, and to have been too hastily obtruded upon the reader. These things have been pruned away with a liberal hand. The wish nearest to his heart is, that there should be nothing in the book unworthy of the cause it was intended to serve. But, though he professes to have done much, much yet remains to be done. After repeated revisals the jealous eye of a man habituated to the detection of errors, still discovers things that might be better. Some are obscure; some are doubtful. As to the last, the author did not conceive himself at liberty to retract any thing without a conviction, or something near a conviction, that he was wrong. He deemed it by no means justifiable to suppress any opinion, because it was inconsistent with the prejudice or persuasion of

others. A circumſtance by which it was originally intended that this book ſhould be characteriſed, was a perfect explicitneſs and unreſerve; and even if this intention ſhould at laſt be an improper one, it was apparently too late to reverſe it. It would have been an act incompatible with every pretenſion to integrity, to have reſcinded ſentiments originally advanced as true, ſo long as they ſtood forward to the author's mind accompanied with their original evidence.

It will perhaps be aſked by ſome perſons in peruſing the preſent edition, how it has happened that the author has varied in ſo many points from the propoſitions advanced in the former? and this variation may even be treated as a topic of cenſure. To this he has only to anſwer, in the firſt place, that the ſpirit and great outlines of the work, he believes, remain untouched, and that it is reaſoned in various particulars with more accuracy from the premiſes and fundamental poſitions than it was before. Secondly, he preſumes to aſcribe the variations to an induſtrious and conſcientious endeavour to keep his mind awake to correction and improvement. He has in ſeveral inſtances detected error; and, ſo far is he from feeling mortified at the diſcovery, that he hopes yet, by ſuch activity and impartiality as he ſhall be able to exert, to arrive at many truths, of which he has ſcarcely at preſent herhaps the ſlightest preſentiment.

Some apology is due to the purchaſers of the former edition reſpecting the variations that appear in this. It was extremely the wiſh of the author, that the variations ſhould be printed ſeparately for their uſe. But how was this poſſible? They grew under his hands; and at laſt, out of eight books of which the work conſiſts, the four firſt and the laſt may, without impropriety, be ſaid to be re-written. An obvious alternative unavoidably offers itſelf. If the work be of that uſeleſs ſort with which the preſs is daily encumbered, theſe purchaſers will not be very ſolicitous about the variations of ſuch a performance. If on

the contrary it be a production of any value, they will probably sympathise with the author. He feels himself particularly indebted to them, for having enabled him to bring the work to its present state of correction; and it is to be hoped that they will not regret the having been instrumental to that purpose.

The parts of the work in which the most material variatons of deduction or statement appear, will be found under the following titles. The Characters of Men Originate in their External Circumstances, The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in their Opinions, Of Personal Virtue and Duty, Of Rights, Of Promises, Of Obedience*, Of Forms of Government†, Illustrations of Sincerity, Of Self-love and Benevolence, Of Good and Evil, Principles of Property, and of the Supposed Advantages of Luxury. Important explanations are also subjoined on the topics of marriage and longevity, Book VIII, Chap. VIII, IX. To these the author would wish particularly to call the attention of his former readers. Inferior variations are scattered every where, and are impossible to be enumerated.

The Enquiry concerning Political Justice has been treated by some persons as of a seditious and inflammatory nature. This is probably an aspersion. If the political principles in favour of which it is written have no solid foundation, they will probably be attended with no more than a temporary fashion; and the present work is little calculated to answer a tempo-

* *The second volume of the present edition was for the greater part sent to the press before the first; there is therefore some contradiction produced in the use of this word, the old sense being occasionally retained (particularly Book* V, *Chap.* VI.) *after it had been judged expedient to give to the word a new definition. Book* V. *Chap* XIII.

† *The principles delivered on this subject in the last chapter of Book* III, *are more fully developed in the three first chapters of Book* IV.

rary purpoſe. If on the contrary they be founded in immutable truth, it is highly probable, to ſay the leaſt, that they will one day gain the aſcendancy. In that caſe, the tendency of ſuch a diſquiſition, will be to ſmooth the gradation, and to prepare the enlightened to ſympathiſe with the juſt claims of the oppreſſed and the humble. No man can more fervently deprecate ſcenes of commotion and tumult than the author of this book; no man would more anxiouſly avoid the lending his aſſiſtance in the moſt diſtant manner to animoſity and bloodſhed; but he perſuades himſelf that, whatever may be the events with which the preſent criſis of human hiſtory ſhall be diſtinguiſhed, the effect of his writings, as far as they are in any degree remembered, will be found favourable to the increaſe and preſervation of general kindneſs and benevolence.

October 29, 1795.

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AN

ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

POLITICAL JUSTICE.

BOOK I.

OF THE POWERS OF MAN CONSIDERED IN HIS SOCIAL CAPACITY.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

Subject of enquiry—of the first book.—Received ideas of political institution.—Propriety of these ideas questioned.—Plan of the first book.

THE subject proposed to be treated in the following work is concerning that form of public or political society, that system of intercourse and reciprocal action, extending beyond the bounds of a single family, which shall be found most to conduce to the general benefit. How may the peculiar and independent operation of each individual in the social state most effectually be preserved? How may the security each man ought to possess, as to his life, and the employment of his faculties according to the dictates of his own understanding, be most certainly defended from invasion? How may the individuals of the human species be made to contribute most sub-

ſtantially to the general improvement and happineſs? The enquiry here undertaken has for its object to facilitate the ſolution of theſe intereſting queſtions.

In entering upon this inveſtigation nothing can be more uſeful, than to examine into the extent of the influence that is to be aſcribed to political inſtitutions; in other words, into the powers of man as they have modified, or may hereafter modify his ſocial ſtate of exiſtence. Upon this ſubject there has been conſiderable difference of opinion.

The moſt uſually received hypotheſis is that which conſiders the effects of government or ſocial inſtitutions, whether acting by expreſs regulations or otherwiſe, as rather of a negative than poſitive nature. No doubt the purpoſes for which government was eſtabliſhed are in their ſtricteſt ſenſe negative, to maintain us in the poſſeſſion of certain advantages againſt the occaſional hoſtility either of domeſtic or foreign invaders. But does the influence of government ſtop, at the point for the ſake of which mankind were firſt prevailed on to adopt it?

Thoſe who believe that it does or can ſtop at this point, neceſſarily regard it as a matter of ſubordinate diſquiſition, or at moſt only co-ordinate with ſeveral others. They ſurvey man in his individual character, in his domeſtic connections, and in the purſuits and attachments which his feelings may incline him to adopt. Theſe of courſe fill the principal part of the picture. Theſe are ſuppoſed, by the ſpeculators of whom we now ſpeak, to be in ordinary caſes independent of all political ſyſtems and eſtabliſhments. It is only in peculiar emergencies and matters that depart from the accuſtomed routine of affairs, that they conceive a private individual to have any occaſion to remember, or to be in the leaſt affected by the government of his country. If he commit or is ſuppoſed to commit any offence againſt the general welfare, if he find himſelf called upon to repreſs the offence of another, or if any danger from foreign hoſtility threaten the community in which he reſides,

in these cases and these only is he obliged to recollect that he has a country. These considerations impose upon him the farther duty of consulting, even when no immediate danger is nigh, how political liberty may best be maintained, and mal-administration prevented.

Many of the best patriots and most popular writers on the subject of government, appear to have proceeded upon the principles here delineated. They have divided moral disquisition and personal happiness from political justice. But, while they have considered the virtues and pleasures of mankind as essentially independent of civil policy, they have justly remarked, that the security with which the one can be exercised and the other enjoyed, will be decided by the wisdom of our public institutions and the equity with which they are administered; and have earnestly pressed it upon the attention of mankind, not to forget, in the rectitude or happiness of the present moment, those precautions and that "generous plan of power," which may tend to render it impregnable to the stratagems of corruption or the insolence of tyranny *.

But, while we confess ourselves indebted to the labours of these writers, and perhaps still more to the intrepid language and behaviour of these patriots, we are incited to enquire whether the topic which engaged their attention be not of higher and more extensive importance than they suspected. Perhaps government is not merely in some cases the defender, and in other the treacherous foe of the domestic virtues. Perhaps it insinuates itself into our personal dispositions, and insensibly communicates its own spirit to our private transactions. Were not the inhabitants of

* *These remarks will for the most part apply to the English writers upon politics, from Sydney and Locke to the author of the Rights of Man. The more comprehensive view has been powerfully delineated by Rousseau and Helvetius.*

ancient Greece and Rome indebted in ſome degree to their political liberties for their excellence in art, and the illuſtrious theatre they occupy in the moral hiſtory of mankind? Are not the governments of modern Europe accountable for the ſlowneſs and inconſtancy of its literary efforts and the unworthy ſelfiſhneſs that characteriſes its inhabitants? Is it not owing to the governments of the Eaſt, that that part of the world can ſcarcely be ſaid to have made any progreſs in intellect or ſcience?

When ſcepticiſm or a ſpirit of inveſtigation has led us to ſtart theſe queſtions, we ſhall be apt not to ſtop at them. A wide field of ſpeculation opens itſelf before us. If government thus inſinuate itſelf in its effects into our moſt ſecret retirements, who ſhall ſet limits to its operation? If it be the author of thus much, who ſhall ſay that it is not author of the whole? May it not happen, that the grand moral evils that exiſt in the world, the calamities by which we are ſo grievouſly oppreſſed, are to be traced to its defects as their ſource, and that their removal is only to be expected from its correction? May it not be found, that the attempt to alter the morals of mankind ſingly and in detail is an erroneous and futile undertaking; and that it will then only be effectually and deciſively performed, when, by regenerating their political inſtitutions, we ſhall change their motives and produce a revolution in the influences that act upon them? To prove the affirmative of theſe queſtions ſhall be the buſineſs of this firſt book.

The method to be purſued for that purpoſe ſhall be, firſt, to take a conciſe ſurvey of the evils exiſting in political ſociety*; ſecondly, to ſhow that theſe evils are to be aſcribed to public inſtitutions†; and thirdly, that they are not the inſeparable condition of our exiſtence, but that human nature admits of their removal and remedy ‡.

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* *Chap.* II, III. † *Chap.* IV. ‡ *Chap.* V, VI, VII, VIII.

CHAP. II.

HISTORY OF POLITICAL SOCIETY.

War.—Frequency of war—among the ancients—among the moderns—the French—the English.—Causes of war. —Penal laws.—Despotism.—Deduction from the whole.

THE extent of the influence of political systems will be forcibly illustrated to us in a concise recollection of the records of political society.

It is an old observation, that the history of mankind is little else than a record of crimes. Society comes recommended to us by its tendency to supply our wants and promote our well being. If we consider the human species, as they were found previously to the existence of political society, it is difficult not to be impressed with emotions of melancholy. But, though the chief purpose of society is to defend us from want and inconvenience, it effects this purpose in a very imperfect degree. We are still liable to casualties, disease, infirmity and death. Famine destroys its thousands, and pestilence its myriads. Anguish visits us under every variety of form, and day after day is spent in languor and dissatisfaction. Exquisite pleasure is a guest of very rare approach, and not less short continuance.

But, though the evils that arise to us from the structure of the material universe are neither trivial nor few, yet the history of political society sufficiently shows that man is of all other beings the most formidable enemy to man. Among the various schemes that he has formed to destroy and plague his kind, war is the most terrible. Satiated with petty mischief and the nauseous detail of crimes, he rises in this instance to a project that lays nations waste, and thins the population of the world. Man directs the murderous engine against the life of his brother; he invents with indefatigable care refinements in destruc-

tion; he proceeds in the midſt of gaiety and pomp to the execution of his horrid purpoſe: whole ranks of ſenſitive beings endowed with the moſt admirable faculties are mowed down in an inſtant; they periſh by inches in the midſt of agony and neglect, lacerated with every variety of method that can give torture to the frame.

This is indeed a tremendous ſcene! Are we permitted to conſole ourſelves under the ſpectacle of its evils, by the rareneſs with which it occurs, and the forcible reaſons that compel men to have recourſe to this laſt appeal of human ſociety? Let us conſider it under each of theſe heads.

War has hitherto been conſidered as the inſeparable ally of political inſtitution. The earlieſt records of time are the annals of conquerors and heroes, a Bacchus, a Seſoſtris, a Semiramis, and a Cyrus. Theſe princes led millions of men under their ſtandard, and ravaged innumerable provinces. A ſmall number only of their forces ever returned to their native homes, the reſt having periſhed of diſeaſes, hardſhips, and miſery. The evils they inflicted, and the mortality introduced in the countries againſt which their expeditions were directed, were certainly not leſs ſevere than thoſe which their countrymen ſuffered.

No ſooner does hiſtory become more preciſe, than we are preſented with the four great monarchies, that is, with four ſucceſsful projects, by means of bloodſhed, violence, and murder, of enſlaving mankind. The expeditions of Cambyſes againſt Egypt, of Darius againſt the Scythians, and of Xerxes againſt the Greeks, ſeem almoſt to ſet credibility at defiance by the fatal conſequences with which they were attended. The conqueſts of Alexander coſt innumerable lives, and the immortality of Cæſar is computed to have been purchaſed by the death of one million two hundred thouſand men.

Indeed the Romans, by the long duration of their wars, and their inflexible adherence to their purpoſe, are to be ranked among the foremoſt deſtroyers of the

human ſpecies. Their wars in Italy continued for more than four hundred years, and their conteſt for ſupremacy with the Carthaginians, two hundred. The Mithridatic war began with a maſſacre of one hundred and fifty thouſand Romans, and in three ſingle actions five hundred thouſand men were loſt by the Eaſtern monarch. Sylla, his ferocious conqueror, next turned his arms againſt his country, and the ſtruggle between him and Marius was attended with proſcriptions, butcheries, and murders that knew no reſtraint from humanity or ſhame. The Romans, at length ſuffered the penalty of their iniquitous deeds; and the world was vexed for three hundred years by the irruptions of Goths, Vandals, Oſtrogoths, Huns, and innumerable hordes of barbarians.

I forbear to detail the victorious progreſs of Mahomet and the pious expeditions of Charlemagne. I will not enumerate the cruſades againſt the infidels, the exploits of Aurungzebe, Gengiſkan and Tamerlane, or the extenſive murders of the Spaniards in the new world. Let us examine Europe, the moſt civiliſed and favoured quarter of the world, or even thoſe countries of Europe which are thought moſt enlightened.

France was waſted by ſucceſſive battles during a whole century, for the queſtion of the Salic law, and the claim of the Plantagenets. Scarcely was this conteſt terminated, before the religious wars broke out, ſome idea of which we may form from the ſiege of Rochelle, where of fifteen thouſand perſons ſhut up eleven thouſand periſhed of hunger and miſery; and from the maſſacre of Saint Bartholomew, in which the numbers aſſaſſinated were forty thouſand. This quarrel was appeaſed by Henry the fourth, and ſucceeded by the thirty years war in Germany for ſuperiority with the houſe of Auſtria, and afterwards by the military tranſactions of Louis the fourteenth.

In England the war of Creſſy and Agincourt only gave place to the civil war of York and Lancaſter, and again after an interval to the war of Charles the firſt

and his parliament. No ſooner was the conſtitution ſettled by the revolution, than we were engaged in a wide field of continental hoſtilities by king William, the duke of Marlborough, Maria Thereſa, and the king of Pruſſia.

And what are in moſt caſes the pretexts upon which war is undertaken? What rational man could poſſibly have given himſelf the leaſt diſturbance for the ſake of chooſing whether Henry the ſixth or Edward the fourth ſhould have the ſtyle of king of England? What Engliſhman could reaſonably have drawn his ſword for the purpoſe of rendering his country an inferior dependency of France, as it muſt neceſſarily have been if the ambition of the Plantagenets had ſucceeded? What can be more deplorable than to ſee us firſt engage eight years in war rather than ſuffer the haughty Maria Thereſa to live with a diminiſhed ſovereignty or in a private ſtation; and then eight years more to ſupport the free-booter who had taken advantage of her helpleſs condition?

The uſual cauſes of war are excellently deſcribed by Swift. "Sometimes the quarrel between two princes is to decide which of them ſhall diſpoſſeſs a third of his dominions, where neither of them pretends to any right. Sometimes one prince quarrels with another, for fear the other ſhould quarrel with him. Sometimes a war is entered upon becauſe the enemy is too ſtrong; and ſometimes becauſe he is too weak. Sometimes our neighbours want the things which we have, or have the things which we want; and we both fight, till they take ours, or give us theirs. It is a very juſtifiable cauſe of war to invade a country after the people have been waſted by famine, deſtroyed by peſtilence, or embroiled by factions among themſelves. It is juſtifiable to enter into a war againſt our neareſt ally, when one of his towns lies convenient for us, or a territory of land that would render our dominions round and compact. If a prince ſends forces into a nation where the people are poor and ignorant, he may lawfully put the half of them to death, and make

ſlaves of the reſt, in order to civiliſe and reduce them from their barbarous way of living. It is a very kingly, honourable, and frequent practice, when one prince deſires the aſſiſtance of another, to ſecure him againſt an invaſion, that the aſſiſtant, when he has driven out the invader, ſhould ſeize on the dominions himſelf, and kill, impriſon, or baniſh the prince he came to relieve*."

If we turn from the foreign tranſactions of ſtates with each other, to the principles of their domeſtic policy, we ſhall not find much greater reaſon to be ſatisfied. A numerous claſs of mankind are held down in a ſtate of abject penury, and are continually prompted by diſappointment and diſtreſs to commit violence upon their more fortunate neighbours. The only mode which is employed to repreſs this violence, and to maintain the order and peace of ſociety, is puniſhment. Whips, axes and gibbets, dungeons, chains and racks, are the moſt approved and eſtabliſhed methods of perſuading men to obedience, and impreſſing upon their minds the leſſons of reaſon. There are few ſubjects upon which human ingenuity has been more fully diſplayed than in inventing inſtruments of torture. The laſh of the whip a thouſand times repeated and flagrant on the back of the defenceleſs victim, the baſtinado on the ſoles of the feet, the diſlocation of limbs, the fracture of bones, the faggot and the ſtake, the croſs, impaling, and the mode of drifting pirates on the Volga, make but a ſmall part of the catalogue. When Damiens, the maniac, perpetrated his abortive attempt on the life of Louis XV. of France, a council of anatomiſts was ſummoned to deliberate how a human being might be deſtroyed with the longeſt protracted and moſt diverſified agony. Hundreds of victims are annually ſacrificed at the ſhrine of poſitive law and political inſtitution.

Add to this the ſpecies of government which prevails over nine-tenths of the globe, which is deſpotiſm : a

* *Gulliver's Travels*, Part IV. Ch. v.

government, as Mr. Locke justly observes, altogether "vile and miserable," and "more to be deprecated than anarchy itself*."

Certainly every man who takes a dispassionate survey of this picture, will feel himself inclined to pause respecting the necessity of the havoc which is thus made of his species, and to question whether the existing mode of protecting mankind against the caprices of each other is the best that can be devised. He will be at a loss which of the two to pronounce most worthy of

* *Locke on Government, Book* I. *Ch.* i. § 1; *and Book* II. *Ch.* vii. § 91. *The words in the last place are:*—"*So that such a man, however intitled,* Czar, *or* Grand Seignior *or how you please, is as much* in the state of nature *with all under his dominion, as he is with the rest of mankind: for wherever any two men are, who have no standing rule, and common judge to appeal to on earth, for the determination of controversies of right betwixt them, there they are still* in the state of nature, *and under all the inconveniencies of it, with only this woeful difference to the subject, or rather slave of an absolute prince: that whereas, in the ordinary state of nature, he has a liberty to judge of his right, and according to the best of his power, to maintain it; now, whenever his property is invaded by the will and order of his monarch, he has not only no appeal, as those in society ought to have, but as if he were degraded from the common state of rational creatures, is denied the liberty to judge of, or to defend his right; and so is exposed to all the misery and inconveniencies, that a man can fear from one, who being in the unrestrained state of nature, is yet corrupted with flattery, and armed with power.*"

Most of the above arguments may be found much more at large in Burke's Vindication of Natural Society; a treatise, in which the evils of the existing political institutions are displayed with incomparable force of reasoning and lustre of eloquence, while the intention of the author was to show that these evils were to be considered as trival.

regret, the misery that is inflicted, or the depravity by which it is produced. If this be the unalterable allotment of our nature, the eminence of our rational faculties must be considered as rather an abortion than a substantial benefit; and we shall not fail to lament that, while in some respects we are elevated above the brutes, we are in so many important ones destined for ever to appear their inferiors.

CHAP. III.

SPIRIT OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

Robbery and fraud, two great vices in society—originate, 1. in extreme poverty—2. in the ostentation of the rich—3. in their tyranny—rendered permanent—1. by legislation—2. by the administration of law—3. by the manner in which property is distributed.

ADDITIONAL perspicuity will be communicated to our view of the evils of political society, if we reflect with farther and closer attention upon what may be called its interior and domestic history.

Two of the greatest abuses relative to the interior policy of nations, which at this time prevail in the world, consist in the irregular transfer of property, either first by violence, or secondly by fraud. If among the inhabitants of any country there existed no desire in one individual to possess himself of the substance of another, or no desire so vehement and restless as to prompt him to acquire it by means inconsistent with order and justice, undoubtedly in that country guilt could scarcely be known but by report. If every man could with perfect facility obtain the necessaries of life, and, obtaining them, feel no uneasy craving after its superfluities, temptation would lose its power. Private interest would visibly accord with

public good; and civil ſociety become what poetry has feigned of the golden age. Let us enquire into the principles to which theſe evils are indebted for their exiſtence.

Firſt then it is to be obſerved, that, in the moſt refined ſtates of Europe, the inequality of property has ariſen to an alarming height. Vaſt numbers of their inhabitants are deprived of almoſt every accommodation that can render life tolerable or ſecure. Their utmoſt induſtry ſcarcely ſuffices for their ſupport. The women and children lean with an inſupportable weight upon the efforts of the man, ſo that a large family has in the lower orders of life become a proverbial expreſſion for an uncommon degree of poverty and wretchedneſs. If ſickneſs or ſome of thoſe caſualties which are perpetually incident to an active and laborious life, be added to theſe burthens, the diſtreſs is yet greater.

It ſeems to be agreed that in England there is leſs wretchedneſs and diſtreſs than in moſt of the kingdoms of the continent. In England the poors' rates amount to the ſum of two millions ſterling per annum. It has been calculated that one perſon in ſeven of the inhabitants of this country derives at ſome period of his life aſſiſtance from this fund. If to this we add the perſons, who, from pride, a ſpirit of independence, or the want of a legal ſettlement, though in equal diſtreſs, receive no ſuch aſſiſtance, the proportion will be conſiderably increaſed.

I lay no ſtreſs upon the accuracy of this calculation; the general fact is ſufficient to give us an idea of the greatneſs of the abuſe. The conſequences that reſult are placed beyond the reach of contradiction. A perpetual ſtruggle with the evils of poverty, if frequently ineffectual, muſt neceſſarily render many of the ſufferers deſperate. A painful feeling of their oppreſſed ſituation will itſelf deprive them of the power of ſurmounting it. The ſuperiority of the rich, being thus unmercifully exerciſed, muſt inevitably expoſe them to repriſals; and the poor man will be induced to regard

the ſtate of ſociety as a ſtate of war, an unjuſt combination, not for protecting every man in his rights and ſecuring to him the means of exiſtence, but for engroſſing all its advantages to a few favoured individuals, and reſerving for the portion of the reſt want, dependence and miſery.

A ſecond ſource of thoſe deſtructive paſſions by which the peace of ſociety is interrupted, is to be found in the luxury, the pageantry and magnificence with which enormous wealth is uſually accompanied. Human beings are capable of encountering with chearfulneſs conſiderable hardſhips, when thoſe hardſhips are impartially ſhared with the reſt of the ſociety, and they are not inſulted with the ſpectacle of indolence and eaſe in others, no way deſerving of greater advantages than themſelves. But it is a bitter aggravation of their own calamity, to have the privileges of others forced on their obſervation, and, while they are perpetually and vainly endeavouring to ſecure for themſelves and their families the pooreſt conveniences, to find others revelling in the fruits of their labours. This aggravation is aſſiduouſly adminiſtered to them under moſt of the political eſtabliſhments at preſent in exiſtence. There is a numerous claſs of individuals, who, though rich, have neither brilliant talents nor ſublime virtues; and however highly they may prize their education, their affability, their ſuperior poliſh and the elegance of their manners, have a ſecret conſciouſneſs that they poſſeſs nothing by which they can ſo ſecurely aſſert their pre-eminence and keep their inferiors at a diſtance, as the ſplendour of their equipage, the magnificence of their retinue and the ſumptuouſneſs of their entertainments. The poor man is ſtruck with this exhibition; he feels his own miſeries; he knows how unwearied are his efforts to obtain a ſlender pittance of this prodigal waſte; and he miſtakes opulence for felicity. He cannot perſuade himſelf that an embroidered garment may frequently cover an aching heart.

A third disadvantage that is apt to connect poverty with discontent consists in the insolence and usurpation of the rich. If the poor man would in other respects compose himself in philosophic indifference, and, conscious that he possesses every thing that is truly honourable to man as fully as his rich neighbour, would look upon the rest as beneath his envy, his neighbour will not permit him to do so. He seems as if he could never be satisfied with his possessions, unless he can make the spectacle of them grating to others; and that honest self-esteem, by which his inferior might otherwise arrive at apathy, is rendered the instrument of galling him with oppression and injustice. In many countries justice is avowedly made a subject of solicitation, and the man of the highest rank and most splendid connections almost infallibly carries his cause against the unprotected and friendless. In countries where this shameless practice is not established, justice is frequently a matter of expensive purchase, and the man with the longest purse is proverbially victorious. A consciousness of these facts must be expected to render the rich little cautious of offence in his dealings with the poor, and to inspire him with a temper overbearing, dictatorial and tyrannical. Nor does this indirect oppression satisfy his despotism. The rich are in all such countries directly or indirectly the legislators of the state; and of consequence are perpetually reducing oppression into a system, and depriving the poor of that little commonage of nature as it were, which might otherwise still have remained to them.

The opinions of individuals, and of consequence their desires, for desire is nothing but opinion maturing for action, will always be in a great degree regulated by the opinions of the community. But the manners prevailing in many countries are accurately calculated to impress a conviction, that integrity, virtue, understanding and industry are nothing, and that opulence is every thing. Does a man, whose exterior denotes indigence, expect to be well received in soci-

ety, and especially by those who would be understood to dictate to the rest? Does he find or imagine himself in want of their assistance and favour? He is presently taught that no merits can atone for a mean appearance. The lesson that is red to him is, "Go home; enrich yourself by whatever means; obtain those superfluities which are alone regarded as estimable; and you may then be secure of an amicable reception." Accordingly poverty in such countries is viewed as the greatest of demerits. It is escaped from with an eagerness that has no leisure for the scruples of honesty. It is concealed as the most indelible disgrace. While one man chooses the path of undistinguishing accumulation, another plunges into expences which are to impose him upon the world as more opulent than he is. He hastens to the reality of that penury, the appearance of which he dreads; and, together with his property, sacrifices the integrity, veracity and character which might have consoled him in his adversity.

Such are the causes, that, in different degrees under the different governments of the world, prompt mankind openly or secretly to encroach upon the property of each other. Let us consider how far they admit either of remedy or aggravation from political institution. Whatever tends to decrease the injuries attendant upon poverty, decreases at the same time the inordinate desire and the enormous accumulation of wealth. Wealth is not pursued for its own sake, and seldom for the sensual gratifications it can purchase, but for the same reasons that ordinarily prompt men to the acquisition of learning, eloquence and skill, for the love of distinction and fear of contempt. How few would prize the possession of riches, if they were condemned to enjoy their equipage, their palaces and their entertainments in solitude, with no eye to wonder at their magnificence, and no sordid observer ready to convert that wonder into an adulation of the owner? If admiration were not generally deemed the exclusive property of the rich, and contempt the constant lac-

quey of poverty, the love of gain would ceaſe to be an univerſal paſſion. Let us conſider in what reſpects political inſtitution is rendered ſubſervient to this paſſion.

Firſt then legiſlation is in almoſt every country groſsly the favourer of the rich againſt the poor. Such is the character of the game laws, by which the induſtrious ruſtic is forbidden to deſtroy the animal that preys upon the hopes of his future ſubſiſtence, or to ſupply himſelf with the food that unſought thruſts itſelf in his path. Such was the ſpirit of the late revenue laws of France, which in ſeveral of their proviſions fell excluſively upon the humble and induſtrious, and exempted from their operation thoſe who are beſt able to ſupport it. Thus in England the land tax at this moment produces half a million leſs than it did a century ago, while the taxes on conſumption have experienced an addition of thirteen millions per annum during the ſame period. This is an attempt, whether effectual or no, to throw the burthen from the rich upon the poor, and as ſuch is an exhibition of the ſpirit of legiſlation. Upon the ſame principle robbery and other offences, which the wealthier part of the community have no temptation to commit, are treated as capital crimes, and attended with the moſt rigorous, often the moſt inhuman puniſhments. The rich are encouraged to aſſociate for the execution of the moſt partial and oppreſſive poſitive laws; monopolies and patents are laviſhly diſpenſed to ſuch as are able to purchaſe them; while the moſt vigilant policy is employed to prevent combinations of the poor to fix the price of labour, and they are deprived of the benefit of that prudence and judgment which would ſelect the ſcene of their induſtry.

Secondly, the adminiſtration of law is not leſs iniquitous than the ſpirit in which it is framed. Under the late government of France the office of judge was a matter of purchaſe, partly by an open price advanced to the crown, and partly by a ſecret douceur paid

to the minister. He, who knew best how to manage his market in the retail trade of justice, could afford to purchase the good will of its functions at the highest price. To the client justice was avowedly made an object of personal solicitation, and a powerful friend, a handsome woman, or a proper present, were articles of a much greater value than a good cause. In England the criminal law is administered with greater impartiality so far as regards the trial itself; but the number of capital offences, and of consequence the frequency of pardons, open a wide door to favour and abuse. In causes relating to property the practice of law is arrived at such a pitch as to render all justice ineffectual. The length of our chancery suits, the multiplied appeals from court to court, the enormous fees of counsel, attornies, secretaries, clerks, the drawing of briefs, bills, replications and rejoinders, and what has sometimes been called the glorious uncertainty of the law, render it frequently more advisable to resign a property than to contest it, and particularly exclude the impoverished claimant from the faintest hope of redress.

Thirdly, the inequality of conditions usually maintained by political institution, is calculated greatly to enhance the imagined excellence of wealth. In the ancient monarchies of the east, and in Turkey at the present day, an eminent station could scarcely fail to excite implicit deference. The timid inhabitant trembled before his superior; and would have thought it little less than blasphemy, to touch the veil drawn by the proud satrap over his inglorious origin. The same principles were extensively prevalent under the feudal system. The vassal, who was regarded as a sort of live stock upon the estate, and knew of no appeal from the arbitary fiat of his lord, would scarcely venture to suspect that he was of the same species. This however constituted an unnatural and violent situation. There is a propensity in man to look farther than the outside; and to come with a writ of enquiry into the

title of the upſtart and the ſucceſsful. By the operation of theſe cauſes the inſolence of wealth has been in ſome degree moderated. Meantime it cannot be pretended that even among ourſelves the inequality is not ſtrained, ſo as to give birth to very unfortunate conſequences. If, in the enormous degree in which it prevails in ſome parts of the world, it wholly debilitate and emaſculate the human race, we ſhall ſee ſome reaſon to believe, that, even in the milder ſtate in which we are accuſtomed to behold it, it is ſtill pregnant with the moſt miſchieveous effects.

CHAP. IV.*

THE CHARACTERS OF MEN ORIGINATE IN THEIR EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

Theory of the human mind.—Subject of the preſent chapter—of the next.—Erroneous opinions refuted.—I. *Innate principles.—This hypotheſis,* 1. *ſuperfluous*—2. *unſatisfactory*—3. *abſurd.*—II. *Inſtincts.—Examination of this doctrine—of the arguments by which it has been enforced: from the early actions of infants—from the deſire of ſelf-preſervation—from ſelf-love—from pity.*—III. *Effects of antenatal impreſſions and original ſtructure.—Variableneſs of the characters of men.—Eaſe with which impreſſions may be counteracted.—Form of the infant undetermined.—Habits of men and other animals compared.—Inference.—Importance of theſe ſpeculations.*—IV. *Reaſonings of the preſent chapter applied.—Three ſorts of education*—1. *accident*—2. *precept*—3. *political inſtitution.*

THUS far we have argued from hiſtorical facts, and from them have collected a very ſtrong preſumptive evidence, tha. political inſtitutions have

* *In the plan of this work it was originally conceived that it was adviſable not to preſs matters of cloſe and*

a more powerful and extensive influence than it has been generally the practice to attribute to them.

But we can never arrive at precise conceptions relative to this part of the subject, without entering into an analysis of the human mind *, and endeavouring

laborious speculation in the outset. It appeared as if moral and political philosophy might assume something more than had been usual of a popular form, without deducting from the justness and depth of its investigation. Upon revisal however it was found that the inferences of the First Book had been materially injured, by an over-scrupulousness in that point. The fruit of the discovery was this and the following chapter, as they now stand. It is recommended, to the reader who finds himself deterred by their apparent difficulty, to pass on to the remaining divisions of the enquiry.

The doctrine of the present chapter, with some variations, has been powerfully inforced by Helvetius. Rousseau has also treated it, so far as relates to the moral habits of the human mind, with great success in his Emile and his Discourse on the Inequality of Mankind.

** Some persons have of late suggested doubts concerning the propriety of the use of the word mind. An accurate philosophy has led modern enquirers to question the existence of two classes of substances in the universe, to reject the metaphysical denominations of spirit and soul, and even to doubt whether human beings have any satisfactory acquaintance with the properties of matter. The same accuracy, it has been said, ought to teach us to discard the term mind. But this objection seems to be premature. We are indeed wholly uncertain whether the causes of our sensations, heat, colour, hardness and extension [the two former of these properties have been questioned in a very forcible manner by Locke,* Hum. Understanding, *the two latter by Boscovich] be in any respect similar to the ideas they produce. We know nothing of the substance or substratum of matter, or of that which is the recipient of thought and perception. We do not even know that the*

to ascertain the part and [illegible] of the causes by which its operations are directed. [illegible] branch of the subject I shall attempt [illegible]derated. [illegible]wo things; first, that the actions and dispositions of mankind are the offspring of circumstances and events, and not of any original determination that they bring into the world; and, secondly, that the great stream of our voluntary actions essentially depends, not upon the direct and immediate impulses of sense, but upon the decisions of the understanding. If these propositions can be sufficiently established, it will follow that the happiness men are able to attain, is proportioned to the justness of the opinions they take as guides in the pursuit; and it will only remain, for the purpose of applying these premises to the point under consideration, that we should demonstrate the opinions of men to be, for the most part, under the absolute control of political institution.

First, The actions and dispositions of men are not the offspring of any original bias that they bring into the world in favour of one sentiment or character rather than another, but flow entirely from the operation of circumstances and events acting upon a faculty of receiving sensible impressions.

There are three modes in which the human mind has been conceived to be modified, independently of the circumstances which occur, and the sensations ex-

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idea annexed to the word substance is correct, or has any counterpart in the reality of existence. But, if there be any one thing that we know more certainly than another, it is the existence of our own thoughts, ideas, perceptions or sensations (by whatever term we may choose to express them), and that they are ordinarily linked together so as to produce the complex notion of unity or personal identity. Now it is this series of thoughts thus linked together, without considering whether they reside in any or what substratum, that is most aptly expressed by the term mind; and in this sense the term is intended to be used throughout the following work.

cited in us: first, il me[illegible] prin[illegible] influ[illegible] fecondly, inſtincts; thirdly, tradity [illegible]scribe [illegible]rences of our ſtructure, together with [illegible] preciſſions we receive in the womb. Let us exami[illegible] each of theſe in their order.

Firſt, innate principles of judgment. Thoſe by whom this doctrine has been maintained, have ſuppoſed that there were certain branches of knowledge, and thoſe perhaps of all others the moſt important, concerning which we felt an irreſiſtible perſuaſion; at the ſame time that we were wholly unable to trace them through any channels of external evidence and methodical deduction. They conceived therefore, that they were originally written in our hearts: or perhaps more properly ſpeaking, that there was a general propenſity in the human mind ſuggeſting them to our reflections, and faſtening them upon our conviction. Accordingly, they eſtabliſhed the univerſal conſent of mankind as one of the moſt infallible criterions of fundamental truth. It appeared upon their ſyſtem, that we were furniſhed with a ſort of ſixth ſenſe, the exiſtence of which was not proved to us, like that of our other ſenſes, by direct and proper evidence, but from the conſideration of certain phenomena in the hiſtory of the human mind, which cannot be otherwiſe accounted for than by the aſſumption of this hypotheſis.

There is an eſſential deficiency in every ſpeculation of this ſort. It turns entirely upon an appeal to our ignorance. Its language is as follows: "You cannot account for certain events from the known laws of the ſubjects to which they belong; therefore they are not deducible from thoſe laws; therefore you muſt admit a new principle into the ſyſtem for the expreſs purpoſe of accounting for them." But there cannot be a ſounder maxim of reaſoning, than that which points out to us the error of admitting into our hypotheſis unneceſſary principles, or referring the phenomena that occur, to remote and extraordinary ſources, when they may with equal facility be referred to ſources

which obviously exist, and the results of which we daily observe. This observation is sufficient to persuade us to reject the doctrine of innate principles. If we consider the infinitely various causes by which the human mind is perceptibly modified, and the different principles, argument, imitation, inclination, early prejudice and imaginary interest, by which opinion is generated, we shall readily perceive, that nothing can be more difficult than to assign any opinion, existing among the human species, and at the same time incapable of being generated by any of these causes and principles.

A careful enquirer will be strongly inclined to suspect the soundness of opinions, which rest for their support on so ambiguous a foundation as that of innate impression. We cannot reasonably question the existence of facts; that is, we cannot deny the existence of our sensations, or the series in which they occur. We cannot deny the axioms of mathematics; for they exhibit nothing more than a consistent use of words, and affirm of some idea that it is itself and not something else. We can entertain little doubt of the validity of mathematical demonstrations, which appear to be irresistible conclusions deduced from indentical propositions. We ascribe a certain weight, sometimes greater and sometimes less, to considerations drawn from analogy. But what degree of weight shall we attribute to affirmations which pretend to rest upon none of these grounds? The most preposterous propositions, incapable of any rational defence, have in different ages and countries appealed to this inexplicable authority, and passed for infallible and innate. The enquirer that has no other object than truth, that refuses to be misled, and is determined to proceed only upon just and sufficient evidence, will find little reason to be satisfied with dogmas which rest upon no other foundation, than a pretended necessity impelling the human mind to yield its assent.

But there is a ſtill more irreſiſtible argument proving to us the abſurdity of the ſuppoſition of innate principles. Every principle is a propoſition: either it affirms, or it denies. Every propoſition conſiſts in the connection of at leaſt two diſtinct ideas, which are affirmed to agree or diſagree with each other. It is impoſſible that the propoſition can be innate, unleſs the ideas to which it relates be alſo innate. A connexion where there is nothing to be connected, a propoſition where there is neither ſubject nor concluſion, is the moſt incoherent of all ſuppoſitions. But nothing can be more incontrovertible, than that we do not bring pre-eſtabliſhed ideas into the world with us.

Let the innate principle be, that virtue is a rule to which we are obliged to conform. Here are three principal and leading ideas, not to mention ſubordinate ones, which it is neceſſary to form, before we can ſo much as underſtand the propoſition. What is virtue? Previouſly to our forming an idea correſponding to this general term, it ſeems neceſſary that we ſhould have obſerved the ſeveral features by which virtue is diſtinguiſhed, and the ſeveral ſubordinate articles of right conduct, that taken together, conſtitute that maſs of practical judgments to which we give the denomination of virtue. Theſe are ſo far from being innate, that the moſt impartial and laborious enquirers are not yet agreed reſpecting them. The next idea included in the above propoſition, is that of a rule or ſtandard, a generical meaſure with which individuals are to be compared, and their conformity or diſagreement with which is to determine their value. Laſtly, there is the idea of obligation, its nature and ſource, the obliger and the ſanction, the penalty and the reward.

Who is there in the preſent ſtate of ſcientifical improvement, that will believe that this vaſt chain of perceptions and notions is ſomething that we bring into the world with us, a myſtical magazine, ſhut up in the human embryo, whoſe treaſures are to be gradually unfolded as circumſtances ſhall require? Who

does not perceive that they are regularly generated in the mind by a series of impressions, and digested and arranged by association and reflexion?

But, if we are not endowed with innate principles of judgment, it has nevertheless been supposed by some persons that we might have instincts to action, leading us to the performance of certain useful and necessary functions, independently of any previous reasoning as to the advantage of these functions. These instincts, like the innate principles of judgment we have already examined, are conceived to be original, a seperate endowment annexed to our being, and not any thing that irresistibly flows from the mere faculty of perception and thought, as acted upon by the circumstances, either of our animal frame, or of the external objects, by which we are affected. They are liable therefore to the same objection as that already urged against innate principles. The system by which they are attempted to be established is a mere appeal to our ignorance, assuming that we are fully acquainted with all the possible operations of known powers, and imposing upon us an unknown power as indispensible to the accounting for certain phenomena. If we were wholly unable to solve these phenomena, it would yet behove us to be extremely cautious in affirming that known principles and causes are inadequate to their solution. If we are able upon strict and mature investigation to trace the greater part of them to their source, this necessarily adds force to the caution here recommended.

An unknown cause is exceptionable, in the first place, inasmuch as it is contrary to the experienced operation of science to multiply causes. It is exceptionable, secondly, because its tendency is to break that universal train of antecedents and consequents, of which the history of the universe is composed. It introduces an action apparently extraneous, instead of imputing the nature of what follows, to the properties of that which preceded. It bars the progress of enquiry by

introducing that which is occult, myſterious and incapable of further inveſtigation. It allows nothing to the future improvements of human knowledge; but repreſents the limits of what is already known, as the limits of human underſtanding.

Let us review a few of the moſt common examples adduced in favour of human inſtincts, and examine how far they authoriſe the concluſion that is attempted to be drawn from them: and firſt, ſome of thoſe actions which appear to ariſe in the moſt inſtantaneous and irreſiſtible manner.

A certain irritation of the palm of the hand will produce that contraction of the fingers, which accompanies the action of graſping. This contraction will at firſt take place unaccompanied with deſign, the object will be graſped without any intention to retain it, and let go again without thought or obſervation. After a certain number of repetitions, the nature of the action will be perceived; it will be performed with a conſciouſneſs of its tendency; and even the hand ſtretched out upon the approach of any object that is deſired. Preſent to the child, thus far inſtructed, a lighted candle. The ſight of it will produce a pleaſurable ſtate of the organs of perception. He will probably ſtretch out his hand to the flame, and will have no apprehenſion of the pain of burning till he has felt the ſenſation.

At the age of maturity, the eyelids inſtantaneouſly cloſe, when any ſubſtance, from which danger is apprehended, is advanced towards them; and this action is ſo conſtant, as to be with great difficulty prevented by a grown perſon, though he ſhould explicitly deſire it. In infants there is no ſuch propenſity; and an object may be approached to their organs, however near and however ſuddenly, without producing this effect. Frowns will be totally indifferent to a child, who has never found them aſſociated with the effects of anger. Fear itſelf is a ſpecies of foreſight, and in no caſe exiſts till introduced by experience.

It has been said, that the desire of self-preservation is innate. I demand what is meant by this desire? Must we not understand by it, a preference of existence to non-existence? Do we prefer any thing but because it is apprehended to be good? It follows, that we cannot prefer existence, previously to our experience of the motives for preference it possesses. Indeed the ideas of life and death are exceedingly complicated, and very tardy in their formation. A child desires pleasure and loaths pain, long before he can have any imagination respecting the ceasing to exist.

Again, it has been said, that self-love is innate. But there cannot be an error more easy of detection. By the love of self we understand the approbation of pleasure, and dislike of pain: but this is only the faculty of perception under another name. Who ever denied that man was a percipient being? Who ever dreamed that there was a particular instinct necessary to render him percipient?

Pity has sometimes been supposed an instance of innate principle; particularly as it seems to arise with greater facility in young persons, and persons of little refinement, than in others. But it was reasonable to expect, that threats and anger, circumstances that have been associated with our own sufferings, should excite painful feelings in us in the case of others, independently of any laboured analysis. The cries of distress, the appearance of agony or corporal infliction, irresistibly revive the memory of the pains accompanied by those symptoms in ourselves. Longer experience and observation enable us to separate the calamities of others and our own safety, the existence of pain in one subject and of pleasure or benefit in others, or in the same at a future period, more accurately than we could be expected to do previously to that experience.

If then it appear that the human mind is unattended either with innate principles or instincts, there are only two remaining circumstances that can be imagined to anticipate the effects of institution, and fix the hu-

man character independently of every ſpecies of education: theſe are, the qualities that may be produced in the human mind previouſly to the era of our birth, and the differences that may reſult from the different ſtructure of the greater or ſubtler elements of the animal frame.

To objections derived from theſe ſources the anſwer will be in both caſes ſimilar.

Firſt, ideas are to the mind nearly what atoms are to the body. The whole maſs is in a perpetual flux; nothing is ſtable and permanent; after the lapſe of a given period not a ſingle particle probably remains the ſame. Who knows not that in the courſe of a human life the character of the individual frequently undergoes two or three revolutions of its fundamental ſtamina? The turbulent man will frequently become contemplative, the generous be changed into ſelfiſh, and the frank and good humoured into peeviſh and moroſe. How often does it happen that, if we meet our beſt loved friend after an abſence of twenty years, we look in vain in the man before us for the qualities that formerly excited our ſympathy, and, inſtead of the exquiſite delight we promiſed ourſelves, reap nothing but diſappointment? If it is thus in habits apparently the moſt rooted, who will be diſpoſed to lay any extraordinary ſtreſs upon the impreſſions which an infant may have received in the womb of his mother?

He that conſiders human life with an attentive eye, will not fail to remark that there is ſcarcely ſuch a thing in character and principles as an irremediable error. Perſons of narrow and limited views may upon many occaſions incline to ſit down in deſpair; but thoſe who are poſſeſſed with a genuine energy will derive new incentives from miſcarriage. Has any unfortunate and undeſirable impreſſion been made upon the youthful mind? Nothing will be more eaſy than for a judicious ſuperintendent, provided its nature is underſtood, and it is taken ſufficiently early, to remedy and obliterate it. Has a child paſſed a certain period

of exiſtence in ill-judged indulgence and habits of command and caprice? The ſkilful parent, when the child returns to its paternal roof, knows that this evil is not invincible, and ſets himſelf with an undoubting ſpirit at the removal of the depravity. It often happens that the very impreſſion, which, if not counteracted, ſhall decide upon the purſuits and fortune of an entire life, might perhaps under other circumſtances be reduced to complete ineffiiciency in half an hour.

It is in corporeal ſtructure as in intellectual impreſſions. The firſt impreſſions of our infancy are ſo much upon the ſurface, that their effects ſcarcely ſurvive the period of the impreſſion itſelf. The mature man ſeldom retains the faintest recollection of the incidents of the two firſt years of his life. Is it to be ſuppoſed that that which has left no trace upon the memory, can, be in an eminent degree powerful in its aſſociated effects? Juſt ſo in the ſtructure of the animal frame. What is born into the world is an unfiniſhed ſketch, without character or deciſive feature impreſſed upon it. In the ſequel there is a correſpondence between the phyſiognomy and the intellectual and moral qualities of the mind. But is it not reaſonable to ſuppoſe that this is produced, by the continual propenſity of the mind to modify its material engine in a particular way? There is for the moſt part no eſſential difference between the child of the lord and of the porter. Provided he do not come into the world infected with any ruinous diſtemper, the child of the lord, if changed in the cradle, would ſcarcely find any greater difficulty than the other, in learning the trade of his foſter father, and becoming a carrier of burthens. The muſcles of thoſe limbs which are moſt frequently called into play, are always obſerved to acquire peculiar flexibility or ſtrength. It is not improbable, if it ſhou d be found that the capacity of the ſcull of a wiſe man is greater than that of a fool, that this enlargement ſhould be produced by the inceſſantly repeated

action of the intellectual faculties, especially considering of how flexible materials the sculls of infants are composed, and at how early an age persons of eminent intellectual merit acquire some portion of their future characteristics.

In the mean time it would be ridiculous to question the real differences that exist between children at the period of their birth. Hercules and his brother, the robust infant whom scarcely any neglect can destroy, and the infant that is with difficulty reared, are undoubtedly from the moment of parturition very different beings. If each of them could receive an education precisely equal and eminently wise, the child labouring under original disadvantge would be benefited, but the child to whom circumstances had been most favourable in the outset, would always retain his priority. These considerations however do not appear materially to affect the doctrine of the present chapter; and that for the following reasons.

First, education never can be equal. The inequality of external circumstances in two beings whose situations most nearly resemble is so great, as to baffle all power of calculation. In the present state of mankind this is eminently the case. There is no fact more palpable, than that children of all sizes and forms indifferently become wise. It is not the man of great stature or vigorous make that outstrips his fellow in understanding. It is not the man who possesses all the external senses in the highest perfection. It is not the man whose health is most vigorous and invariable. Those moral causes that awaken the mind, that inspire sensibility, imagination and perseverance, are distributed without distinction to the tall or the dwarfish, the graceful or the deformed, the lynx-eyed or the blind. But if the more obvious distinctions of animal structure appear to have little share in deciding upon their associated varieties of intellect, it is surely in the highest degree unjustifiable to attribute these varieties to such subtle and imperceptible differences, as, being

out of our power to assign, are yet gratuitously assumed to account for the most stupendous effects. This mysterious solution is the refuge of indolence or the instrument of imposture, but incompatible with a sober and persevering spirit of investigation.

Secondly, it is sufficient to recollect the nature of moral causes to be satisfied that their efficiency is nearly unlimited. The essential differences that are to be found between individual and individual, originate in the opinions they form, and the circumstances by which they are controled. It is impossible to believe that the same moral train would not make nearly the same man. Let us suppose a being to have heard all the arguments and been subject to all the excitements that were ever addressed to any celebrated character. The same arguments, with all their strength and all their weakness, unaccompanied with the smallest addition or variation, and retailed in exactly the same proportions from month to month and year to year, must surely have produced the same opinions. The same excitements, without reserve, whether direct or accidental, must have created the same propensities. Whatever science or pursuit was selected by this celebrated character, must be loved by the person respecting whom we are supposing this identity of impressions. In fine, it is impression that makes the man, and compared with the empire of impression, the mere differences of animal structure are inexpressibly unimportant and powerless.

These truths will be brought to our minds with much additional evidence if we compare in this respect the case of brutes with that of men. Among the inferior animals breed is a circumstance of considerable importance, and a judicious mixture and preservation in this point is found to be attended with the most unequivocal results. But nothing of that kind appears to take place in our own species. A generous blood, a gallant and fearless spirit is by no means propagated from father to son. When a particular appellation is granted, as is usually practised in the existing governments

of Europe, to designate the descendants of a magnanimous ancestry, we do not find, even with all the arts of modern education to assist, that such descendants are the legitimate representatives of departed heroism. Whence comes this difference? Probably from the more irresistible operation of moral causes. It is not impossible that among savages those differences would be conspicuous, which with us are annihilated. It is not unlikely that, if men, like brutes, were withheld from the more considerable means of intellectual improvement, if they derived nothing from the discoveries and sagacity of their ancestors, if each individual had to begin absolutely *de novo* in the discipline and arrangement of his ideas, blood or whatever other circumstances distinguish one man from another at the period of his nativity, would produce as memorable effects in man, as they now do in those classes of animals that are deprived of our advantages. For in the case of brutes education and care on the part of man seems to be nearly indispensable, if we would have the foal of the finest racer degenerate to the level of the cart-horse. In plants the peculiarities of soil decide in a great degree upon the future properties of each. But who would think of forming the character of a human being by the operations of heat and cold, dryness and moisture upon the animal frame? With us moral considerations swallow up the effects of every other accident. Present a pursuit to the mind, convey to it the apprehension of calamity or advantage, excite it by motives of aversion or motives of affection, and the slow and silent influence of material causes perishes like dews at the rising of the sun.

The result of these considerations is, that at the moment of birth man has really a certain character, and each man a character different from his fellows. The accidents which pass during the months of percipiency in the womb of the mother, produce a real effect. Various external accidents, unlimited as to the period of their commencement, modify in different ways the

the elements of the animal frame. Every thing in the universe is linked and united together. No event however minute and imperceptible, is barren of a train of consequences, however comparatively evanescent those consequences may in some instances be found. If there have been philosophers that have asserted otherwise, and taught that all minds from the period of birth were precisely alike, they have reflected discredit by such an incautious statement upon the truth they proposed to defend.

But though the original differences of man and man be arithmetically speaking something, speaking in the way of a general and comprehensive estimate they may be said to be almost nothing. If the early impressions of our childhood may by a skilful observer be as it were obliterated almost as soon as made, how much less can the confused and unpronounced impressions of the womb, be expected to resist the multiplicity of ideas that successively contribute to wear out their traces? If the temper of the man appear in many instances to be totally changed, how can it be supposed that there is any thing permanent and inflexible in the propensities of a new-born infant? and, if not in the character of the disposition, how much less in that of the understanding?

Speak the language of truth and reason to your child, and be under no apprehension for the result. Show him that what you recommend is truly valuable and desirable, and fear not but he will desire it. Convince his understanding, and you enlist all his powers animal and intellectual in your service. How long has the genius of education been disheartened and unnerved by the pretence that man is born all that it is possible for him to become? How long has the jargon imposed upon the world, which would persuade us that in instructing a man you do not add to, but unfold his stores? The miscarriages of education do not proceed from the boundedness of its powers, but from the mistakes with which it is accompanied. We often inspire dis-

guſt, where we mean to infuſe deſire. We are wrapped up in ourſelves, and do not obſerve, as we ought, ſtep by ſtep the ſenſations that paſs in the mind of our hearer. We miſtake compulſion for perſuaſion, and delude ourſelves into the belief that deſpotiſm is the road to the heart.

Education will proceed with a firm ſtep and with genuine luſtre, when thoſe who conduct it ſhall know what a vaſt field it embraces; when they ſhall be aware, that the effect, the queſtion whether the pupil ſhall be a man of perſeverance and enterpriſe or a ſtupid and inanimate dolt, depends upon the powers of thoſe under whoſe direction he is placed, and the ſkill with which thoſe powers ſhall be applied. Induſtry will be exerted with tenfold alacrity, when it ſhall be generally confeſſed that there are no obſtacles to our improvement, which do not yield to the powers of induſtry. Multitudes will never exert the energy neceſſary to extraordinary ſucceſs, till they ſhall diſmiſs the prejudices that fetter them, get rid of the chilling ſyſtem of occult and inexplicable cauſes, and conſider the human mind as an intelligent agent, guided by motives and proſpects preſented to the underſtanding, and not by cauſes of which we have no proper cognizance and can form no calculation.

Apply theſe conſiderations to the ſubject of politics, and they will authoriſe us to infer, that the excellencies and defects of the human character, are not derived from cauſes beyond the reach of ingenuity to modify and correct. If we entertain falſe views and be involved in pernicious miſtakes, this diſadvantage is not the offspring of an irreſiſtable deſtiny. We have been ignorant, we have been haſty, or we have been miſled. Remove the cauſes of this ignorance or this miſcalculation, and the effects will ceaſe. Show me in the cleareſt and moſt unambiguous manner that a certain mode of proceeding is moſt reaſonable in itſelf or moſt conducive to my intereſt, and I ſhall infallibly purſue that mode, as long as the views you ſuggeſted

to me continue present to my mind. The conduct of human beings in every situation is governed, by the judgments they make and the sensations that are communicated to them.

It has appeared that the characters of men are determined in all their most essential circumstances by education. By education in this place I would be understood to convey the most comprehensive sense that can possibly be annexed to that word, including every incident that produces an idea in the mind, and can give birth to a train of reflections. It may be of use for a clearer understanding of the subject we here examine to consider education under three heads; the education of accident, or those impressions we receive independently of any design on the part of the preceptor; education commonly so called, or the impressions which he intentionally communicates; and political education, or the modification our ideas receive from the form of government under which we live. In the course of this successive review we shall be enabled in some degree to ascertain the respective influence which is to be attributed to each.

It is not unusual to hear persons dwell with emphasis on the wide difference of the results in two young persons who have been educated together; and this has been produced as a decisive argument in favour of the essential differences we are supposed to bring into the world with us. But this could scarcely have happened but from extreme inattention in the persons who have so argued. Innumerable ideas, or changes in the state of the percipient being, probably occur in every moment of time. How many of these enter into the plan of the preceptor? Two children walk out together. One busies himself in plucking flowers or running after butterflies, the other walks in the hand of their conductor. Two men view a picture. They never see it from the same point of view, and therefore strictly speaking never see the same picture. If they sit down to hear a lecture or any piece of instruction, they never

ſit down with the ſame degree of attention, ſerioufneſs or good humour. The previous ſtate of the mind is different, and therefore the impreſſion received cannot be the ſame. It has been found in the hiſtory of ſeveral eminent men, and probably would have been found much oftener had their juvenile adventures been more accurately recorded, that the moſt trivial circumſtances has ſometimes furniſhed the original occaſion of awakening the ardour of their minds and determining the bent of their ſtudies.

It may however reaſonably be ſuſpected whether the education of deſign be not, intrinſically conſidered, more powerful than the education of accident. If at any time it appear impotent, this is probably owing to miſtake in the project. The inſtructor continually fails in wiſdom of contrivance, or conciliation of manner, or both. It may often happen, either from the pedantry of his habits, or the impatience of his temper, that his recommendation ſhall operate rather as an antidote than an attraction. Preceptors are apt to pique themſelves upon diſcloſing part and concealing part of the truth, upon a ſort of common-place, beaten exhortation to be addreſſed to youth, which it would be an inſult to offer to the underſtandings of men. But children are not inclined to conſider him entirely as their friend, whom they detect in an attempt to impoſe upon them. Were it otherwiſe, were we ſufficiently frank and ſufficiently ſkilful, did we apply ourſelves to excite the ſympathy of the young and gain their confidence, it is not to be believed but that the ſyſtematical meaſures of the preceptor would have a deciſive advantage over the deſultory and precarious influence of accidental impreſſion. Children are a ſort of raw material put into our hands, a ductile and yielding ſubſtance, which if we do not ultimately mould in conformity to our wiſhes, it is becauſe we throw away the power committed to us, by the folly with which we are accuſtomed to exert it. But there is another error not leſs deciſive. The object we chooſe

is an improper one. Our labour is expended, not in teaching truth, but in teaching falſhood. When that is the caſe, education is neceſſarily and happily maimed of half its powers. The ſucceſs of an attempt to miſlead can never be complete. We continually communicate in ſpite of ourſelves the materials of juſt reaſoning; reaſon is the genuine exerciſe, and truth the native element of an intellectual nature; it is no wonder therefore, that, with a crude and abortive plan to govern his efforts, the preceptor is perpetually baffled, and the pupil, who has been thus ſtored with ſyſtematic deluſions, and half-diſcovered, clandeſtine truths, ſhould come out any thing rather than that which his inſtructor intended him.

It remains to be conſidered what ſhare political inſtitution and forms of government occupy in the education of every human being. Their degree of influence depends upon two eſſential circumſtances.

Firſt, it is nearly impoſſible to oppoſe the education of the preceptor, and the education we derive from the forms of government under which we live, to each other; and therefore, however powerful the former of theſe may be abſolutely conſidered, it can never enter the liſts with the latter upon equal terms. Should any one talk to us of reſcuing a young perſon from the ſiniſter influence of a corrupt government by the power of education, it will be fair to aſk, who is the preceptor by whom this taſk is to be effected? Is he born in the ordinary mode of generation, or does he deſcend among us from the ſkies? Has his character been in no degree modified by that very influence he undertakes to counteract? It is beyond all controverſy, that men who live in a ſtate of equality, or that approaches equality, will be frank, ingenuous and intrepid in their carriage; while thoſe who inhabit where a great diſparity of ranks has prevailed, will be diſtinguiſhed by coldneſs, irreſoluteneſs, timidity and caution. Will the preceptor in queſtion be altogether ſuperior to theſe qualities? Which of us is

there who utters his thoughts in the fearless and explicit manner that true wisdom would prescribe? Who, that is sufficiently critical and severe, does not detect himself every hour in some act of falsehood or equivocation, that example and early habits have planted too deeply to be eradicated? But the question is not, what extraordinary persons can be found, who may shine illustrious exceptions to the prevailing degeneracy of their neighbours. As long as parents and teachers in general shall fall under the established rule, it is clear that politics and modes of government will educate and infect us all. They poison our minds, before we can resist, or so much as suspect their malignity. Like the barbarous directors of the Eastern seraglios, they deprive us of our virility, and fit us for their despicaple employment from the cradle. So false is the opinion that has too generally prevailed, that politics is an affair with which ordinary men have little concern.

Secondly, supposing the preceptor had all the qualifications that can reasonably be imputed, let us recollect for a moment what are the influences with which he would have to struggle. Political institution, by the consequences with which it is pregnant, strongly suggests to every one who enters within its sphere, what is the path he should avoid, as well as what he should pursue. Under a government fundamentally erroneous, he will see intrepid virtue proscribed, and a servile and corrupt spirit uniformly encouraged. But morality itself is nothing but a calculation of consequences. What strange confusion will the spectacle of that knavery which is universally practised through all the existing classes of society, produce in the mind? The preceptor cannot go out of the world, or prevent the communication of his pupil with human beings of a character different from his own. Attempts of that kind are generally unhappy, stamped with the impression of artifice, intolerance and usurpation. From earliest infancy therefore there will be two principles

contending for empire, the peculiar and elevated syſtem of the preceptor, and the groveling views of the great maſs of mankind. Theſe will generate confuſion, uncertainty and irreſolution. At no period of life will the effect correſpond to what it would have been, if the community were virtuous and wiſe. But its effect, obſcure and imperceptible for a time, may be expected to burſt into exploſion at the period of puberty. When the pupil firſt becomes maſter of his own actions, and chooſes his avocations and his aſſociates, he will neceſſarily be acquainted with many things of which before he had very ſlender notions. At this time the follies of the world wear their moſt alluring face. He can ſcarcely avoid imagining that he has hitherto laboured under ſome ſpecies of deluſion. Deluſion, when detected, cauſes him upon whom it was practiſed to be indignant and reſtive. The only chance which remains is that, after a time, he ſhould be recalled and awakened: and againſt this chance there are the progreſſive enticements of ſociety; ſenſuality, ambition, ſordid intereſt, falſe ridicule, and the inceſſant decay of that unblemiſhed purity which attended him in his outſet. The beſt that can be expected, is that he ſhould return at laſt to ſobriety and truth, with a mind hackneyed and relaxed by repeated errors, and a moral conſtitution in which the ſeeds of debility have been widely and irretrievably ſown.

CHAP. V.

THE VOLUNTARY ACTIONS OF MEN ORIGINATE IN THEIR OPINIONS.

Prevailing ideas on this subject.—Its importance in the science of politics.—I. Voluntary and involuntary action distinguished.—Inferences.—Opinion of certain religionists on this subject—of certain philosophers.—Conclusion.—II. Self deception considered—Custom, or habit delineated.—Actions proceeding from this source imperfectly voluntary.—Subtilety of the mind—Tendency of our progressive improvements.—Application.—III. Comparative powers of sense and reason.—Nature of sensual gratification.—Its evident inferiority.—Objection from the priority of sensible impressions—refuted from analogy—from the progressive power of other impressions—from experience.—Inference.—IV. Vulgar errors.—Meanings of the word passion—1. ardour—2. delusion—3. appetite—of the word nature.—V. Corollaries.—Truth will prevail over error—capable of being brought home to the conviction of the mind—omnipotent.—Vice not incurable.—Perfectibility of man.

IF by the reasons already given we have removed the supposition of any original bias in the mind that is inaccessible to human skill, and shown that the defects to which we are now subject are not irrevocably entailed upon us, there is another question of no less importance to be decided, before the ground can appear to be sufficiently cleared for political melioration. There is a doctrine, the advocates of which have not been less numerous than those for innate principles and instincts, teaching "that the conduct of human beings in many important particulars is not determined upon any grounds of reasoning and comparison, but by immediate and irresistible impression, in

defiance of the concluſions and conviction of the underſtanding. Man is a compound being," ſay the favourers of this hypotheſis, "made up of powers of reaſoning and powers of ſenſation. Theſe two principles are in perpetual hoſtility; and, as reaſon will in ſome caſes ſubdue all the allurements of ſenſe, ſo there are others in which the headlong impulſes of ſenſe will for ever defeat the tardy deciſions of judgment. He that ſhould attempt to regulate man entirely by his underſtanding, and extirpate the irregular influences of material excitement; or that ſhould imagine it practicable by any proceſs and in any length of time to reduce the human ſpecies under the influence of general truth*; would ſhow himſelf profoundly ignorant of ſome of the firſt laws of our nature."

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* *Objections have been ſtarted to the uſe of the word truth in this abſolute conſtruction, as if it implied in the mind of the writer the notion of ſomething having an independent and ſeparate exiſtence, whereas nothing can be more certain than that truth, that is affirmative and negative propoſitions, has ſtrictly no exiſtence but in the mind of him who utters or hears it. But theſe objections ſeem to have been taken up too haſtily. It cannot be denied, that there are ſome propoſitions which are believed for a time and afterwards refuted; and others, ſuch as moſt of the theorems of mathematics, and many of thoſe of natural philoſophy, reſpecting which there is no probability that they ever will be refuted. Every ſubject of inquiry is ſuſceptible of affirmation and negation; and thoſe propoſitions concerning it, which deſcribe the real relations of things, may in a certain ſenſe, whether we be or be not aware that they do ſo, be ſaid to be true. Taken in this ſenſe, truth is immutable. He that ſpeaks of its immutability, does nothing more than predict with greater or leſs probability, and ſay, "This is what I believe, and what all reaſonable beings, till they ſhall fall ſhort of me in their degree of information, will continue to believe."*

This doctrine, which in many cases has passed so current as to be thought scarcely a topic for examination, is highly worthy of a minute analysis. If true, it, no less than the doctrine of innate principles, opposes a bar to the hopes and improvement of social institutions. Certain it is, that our prospects of melioration depend upon the progress of enquiry and the general advancement of knowledge. If therefore there be points, and those important ones, in which, so to express myself, knowledge and the thinking principle in man cannot be brought into contact, if, however great be the improvement of his reason, he will not the less certainly in many cases act in a way irrational and absurd, this consideration must greatly overcloud the prospect of the moral reformer.

There is another consequence that will flow from the vulgarly received doctrine upon this subject. If man be, by the very constitution of his nature, the subject of opinion, and if truth and reason when properly displayed give us a complete hold upon his choice, then the search of the political inquirer will be much simplified. Then we have only to discover what form of civil society is most comformable to reason, and we may rest assured that, as soon as men shall be persuaded from conviction to adopt that form, they will have acquired to themselves an invaluable benefit. But if reason be frequently inadequate to its task, if there be an opposite principle in man, resting upon its own ground and maintaining a separate jurisdiction, the most rational principles of society may be rendered abortive, it may be necessary to call in mere sensible causes to encounter causes of the same nature, folly may be the fittest instrument to effect the purposes of wisdom, and vice to disseminate and establish the public benefit. In that case the salutary prejudices and useful delusions (as they have been called) of aristocracy, the glittering diadem, the magnificent canopy, the ribbands, stars and titles of an illustrious rank, may at last be found the

fittest instruments for guiding and alluring to his proper ends the savage, man *.

Such is the nature of the question to be examined, and such its connection with the enquiry concerning the influence of political institutions.

The more accurately to conceive the topic before us, it is necessary to observe that it relates to the voluntary actions of man.

The distinction between voluntary and involuntary action, if properly stated, is exceedingly simple. That action is involuntary, which takes place in us, either without foresight on our part, or contrary to the full bent of our inclinations. Thus, if a child or a person of mature age burst into tears in a manner unexpected or unforeseen by himself, or if he burst into tears, though his pride or any other principle make him exert every effort to restrain them, this action is involuntary. Voluntary action is, where the event is foreseen previously to its occurrence, and the idea of certain consequences to result from the cause or occasion, or as it is most frequently termed, the motive †, belonging to that event. Let it be observed that the word, action, is here used in the sense of natural philosphers, as descriptive of a change taking place in any part of the universe, without entering into the question whether that change be necessary or free.

Now let us consider what are the inferences that immediately result from the above simple and undeniable explanation of voluntary action.

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* *Book V, Chap. XV.*

† *The term motive is applicable in all cases, where the regular operations of inanimate matter are superseded by the interference of intelligence. Whatever sensation or perception in the mind is capable of influencing this interference, is called motive. Motive therefore is applicable to the case of all actions originating in sensation or perception, whether voluntary or involuntary.*

'Voluntary action is accompanied with foresight; the idea of certain consequences is its motive.' But foresight is not an affair of simple and immediate impulse: it implies a series of observations so extensive as to enable us from like antecedents to infer like consequents. 'Voluntary action is occasioned by the idea of consequences to result.' Wine is set before me, and I fill my glass. I do this, either because I foresee that the flavour will be agreeable to my palate, or that its effect will be to produce gaiety and exhilaration, or that my drinking it will prove the kindness and good humour I feel towards the company with which I am engaged. If in any case my action in filling dwindle into mechanical or semi-mechanical, done with little or no adverting of the mind to its performance, it so far becomes an involuntary action. But, if every voluntary action, be performed for the sake of its consequences, then in every voluntary action there is comparison and judgment. Every such action proceeds upon the apprehended truth of some proposition. The mind decides "this is good" or "desirable;" and immediately upon that decision, if accompanied with a persuasion that we are competent to accomplish this good or desirable thing, the limbs proceed to their office. The mind decides "this is better than something else;" either wine and cordials are before me, and I choose the wine rather than the cordials; or the wine only is presented or thought of, and I decide that to take the wine is better than to abstain from it. Thus it appears that in every voluntary action there is preference or choice, which indeed are synonimous terms.

This full elucidation of the nature of voluntary action enables us to proceed a step farther. Hence it appears that the voluntary actions of men in all cases originate in their opinions. The actions of men, it will readily be admitted, originate in the state of their minds immediately previous to those actions. Actions therefore which are preceded by a judgment "this is

good," or "this is desirable," originate in the state of judgment or opinion upon that subject. It may happen that the opinion may be exceedingly fugitive; it may have been preceded by aversion and followed by remorse; but it was unquestionably the opinion of the mind at the instant in which the action commenced.

It is by no means uninstructive to remark, how those persons, who seem most to have discarded the use of their reason, have frequently fallen by accident, as it were, upon important truths. There has been a sect of Christians, who taught that the only point which was to determine the future everlasting happiness or misery of mankind was their faith. Being pressed with the shocking immorality of their doctrine, and the cruel and tyrannical character it imputed to the author of the universe, some of the most ingenious of them have explained themselves thus.

"Man is made up of two parts, his internal sentiments and his external conduct. Between these two there is a close and indissoluble connexion; as are his sentiments, so is his conduct. Faith, that faith which alone entitles to salvation, is indeed a man's opinion, but not every opinion he may happen openly to profess, not every opinion, which floats idly in his brain, and is only recollected when he is gravely questioned upon the subject. Faith is the opinion that is always present to the mind, that lives in the memory, or at least infallibly suggests itself, when any article of conduct is considered with which it is materially connected. Faith is that strong, permanent and lively persuasion of the understanding with which no delusive temptations will ever be able successfully to contend. Faith modifies the conduct, gives a new direction to the dispositions, and renders the whole character pure and heavenly. But heavenly dispositions only can fit a man for the enjoyment of heaven. Heaven in reality is not so properly a place as a state of the mind; and, if a wicked man could be introduced into the society of "saints made perfect," he would be miserable.

God therefore, when he requires faith alone as a qualification for heaven, is so far from being arbitrary, that he merely executes the laws of reason, and does the only thing it was possible for him to do."

In this system there are enormous absurdities, but the view it exhibits of the source of voluntary action, sufficiently corresponds with the analysis we have given of the subject.

The author of the Characteristics has illustrated this branch of the nature of man in a very masterly manner. He observes: "There are few who think always consistently, or according to one certain hypothesis upon any subject so abstruse and intricate as the cause of all things, and the œconomy or government of the universe. For it is evident in the case of the most devout people, even by their own confession, that there are times when their faith hardly can support them in the belief of a supreme wisdom; and that they are often tempted to judge disadvantageously of a providence and just administration in the whole.

"That alone therefore is to be called a man's opinion, which is of any other the most habitual to him, and occurs upon most occasions. So that it is hard to pronounce certainly of any man, that he is an atheist; because, unless his whole thoughts are at all seasons and on all occasions steadily bent against all supposition or imagination of design in things, he is no perfect atheist. In the same manner, if a man's thoughts are not at all times steady and resolute against all imagination of chance, fortune, or ill design in things, he is no perfect theist. But, if any one believes more of chance and confusion than of design, he is to be esteemed more an atheist than a theist [this is surely not a very accurate or liberal view of the atheistical system], from that which most predominates, or has the ascendant. And, in case he believes more of the prevalency of an ill designing principle than of a good one, he is rather a demonist, and may be justly so called, from

the ſide to which the balance of his judgment moſt inclines*."

From this view of the ſubject we ſhall eaſily be led to perceive, how little the fact of the variableneſs and inconſtancy of human conduct, is incompatible with the principle here delivered, that the voluntary actions of men in all caſes originate in their opinions. The perſuaſion that exiſts in the mind of the drunkard in committing his firſt act of intoxication, that in ſo doing he complies with the moſt cogent and irreſiſtible reaſons capable of being aſſigned upon the ſubject, may be exceedingly temporary; but it is the clear and unequivocal perſuaſion of his mind at the moment that he determines upon the action. The thoughts of the murderer will frequently be in a ſtate of the moſt tempeſtuous fluctuation; he may make and unmake his diabolical purpoſe fifty times in an hour; his mind may be torn a thouſand ways by terror and fury, malignity and remorſe. But, whenever his reſolution is formed, it is formed upon the ſuggeſtions of the rational faculty; and, when he ultimately works up his mind to the perpetration, he is then moſt ſtrongly impreſſed with the ſuperior recommendations of the conduct he purſues. One of the fallacies by which we are moſt frequently induced to a conduct which our habitual judgment diſapproves, is that our attention becomes ſo engroſſed by a particular view of the ſubject, as wholly to forget for the moment thoſe conſiderations which at other times were accuſtomed to determine our opinion. In ſuch caſes it frequently happens, that the neglected conſideration recurs the inſtant the hurry of action has ſubſided, and we ſtand aſtoniſhed at our own infatuation and folly.

This reaſoning, however clear and irreſiſtible it may appear, is yet expoſed to one very ſtriking objection. "According to the ideas here delivered, men always proceed in their voluntary actions upon judgments

* *Characteriſtics; Treatiſe* VI, *B.* I, *Part* i, § 2.

extant to their underſtanding. Such judgments muſt muſt be attended with conſciouſneſs; and, were this hypotheſis a ſound one, nothing could be more eaſy than for a man in all caſes to aſſign the preciſe reaſon that induced him to any particular action. The human mind would then be a very ſimple machine, always aware of the grounds upon which it proceeded, and ſelf-deception would be impoſſible. But this ſtatement is completely in oppoſition to experience and hiſtory. Aſk a man the reaſon why he puts on his clothes, why he eats his dinner, or performs any other ordinary action of his life. He immediately heſitates, endeavours to recollect himſelf, and often aſſigns a reaſon the moſt remote from what the true philoſophy of motive would have led us to expect. Nothing is more clear, than that the moving cauſe of this action was not expreſsly preſent to his apprehenſion at the time he performed it. Self-deception is ſo far from impoſſible, that it is one of the moſt ordinary phenomena with which we are accquainted. Nothing is more uſual than for a man to impute his actions to honourable motives, when it is nearly demonſtrable that they flowed from ſome corrupt and contemptible ſource. On the other hand many perſons ſuppoſe themſelves to be worſe, than an impartial ſpectator will find any good reaſon to believe them. A penetrating obſerver will frequently be able to convince his neighbour that upon ſuch an occaſion he was actuated by motives very different from what he imagined. Philoſophers to this hour diſpute whether human beings in their moſt virtuous exertions, are under the power of diſintereſted benevolence, or merely of an enlightened ſelf-intereſt. Here then we are preſented, in one or other of theſe ſets of philoſophers, with a ſtriking inſtance of men's acting from motives diametrically oppoſite to thoſe which they ſuppoſe to be the guides of their conduct. Self-examination is to a proverb one of the moſt arduous of thoſe taſks which true virtue impoſes. Are not theſe facts in expreſs

contradiction to the doctrine, that the voluntary actions of men in all cases orignate in the judgments of the understanding?"

Undoubtedly the facts which have been here enumerated appear to be strictly true. To determine how far they effect the doctrine of the present chapter, it is necessary to return to our analysis of the phenomena of the human mind. Hitherto we have considered the actions of human beings only under two classes, voluntary and involuntary. In strictness however there is a third class, which belongs to neither, yet partakes of the nature of both.

We have already defined voluntary action to be that of which certain consequences, foreseen, and considered either as objects of desire or aversion, are the motive. Foresight and volition are inseparable. But what is foreseen must by the very terms be present to the understanding. Every action therefore, so far as it is perfectly voluntary, flows solely from the decision of the judgment. But the actions above cited, such as relate to our garments and our food, are only imperfectly voluntary *.

In respect of volition there appear to be two stages in the history of the human mind. Foresight is the result of experience; therefore foresight, and by parity of reasoning volition, cannot enter into the earliest actions of a human being. As soon however as the infant perceives the connexion between certain attitudes and gestures and the circumstance of receiving suck, for example, he is brought to desire those preliminaries for the sake of that result. Here, so far as relates to volition and the judgment of the understanding, the action is as simple as can well be imagined. Yet, even in this instance, the motive may

* *This distribution is in substance the same as that of Hartley's but is here introduced without any attention to adopt the peculiarities of his phraseology.* Observations on Man, Chap. I. § iii. Prop. 21.

be ſaid to be complex. Habit, or cuſtom, has its ſhare. This habit is founded in actions originally involuntary and mechanical, and modifies after various methods ſuch of our actions as are voluntary.

But there are habits of a ſecond ſort. In proportion as our experience enlarges, the ſubjects of voluntary action become more numerous. In this ſtate of the human being he ſoon comes to perceive a conſiderable ſimilarity between ſituation and ſituation. In conſequence he feels inclined to abridge the proceſs of deliberation, and to act to-day conformably to the determination of yeſterday. Thus the underſtanding fixes for itſelf reſting places, is no longer a novice, and is not at the trouble continually to go back and reviſe the original reaſons which determined it to a courſe of action. Thus the man acquires habits, from which it is very difficult to wean him, and which he obeys without being able to aſſign either to himſelf or others, any explicit reaſon for his proceeding. This is the hiſtory of prepoſſeſſion and prejudice.

Let us conſider how much there is of voluntary, and how much of involuntary in this ſpecies of action. Let the inſtance be of a man going to church to-day. He has been accuſtomed, ſuppoſe, to a certain routine of of this kind from his childhood. Moſt undoubtedly then in performing this function to-day, his motive does not ſingly conſiſt of inducements preſent to his underſtanding. His feelings are not of the ſame nature as thoſe of a man who ſhould be perſuaded by a train of reaſoning to perform that function for the firſt time in his life. His caſe is partly ſimilar to that of a ſcholar who has gone through a courſe of geometry, and who now believes the truth of the propoſitions upon the teſtimony of his memory, though the proofs are by no means preſent to his underſtanding. Thus the perſon in queſtion is partly induced to go to church by reaſons which once appeared ſufficient to his underſtanding, and the effects of which remain though the reaſons are now forgotten, or at leaſt are not continually recollect-

ed. He goes partly for the ſake of decorum, character, and to ſecure the good will of his neighbours. A part of his inducement alſo perhaps is, that his parents accuſtomed him to go to church at firſt from the mere force of authority, and that the omiſſion of a habit to which we have been formed, is apt to ſit awkwardly and uneaſily upon the human mind. Thus it happens that a man who ſhould ſcrupulouſly examine his own conduct in going to church, would find great difficulty in ſatisfying his mind as to the preciſe motive, or proportion contributed by different motives, which maintained his adherence to that practice.

It is probable however that when he goes to church he determines that this action is right, proper or expedient, referring for the reaſons which prove this rectitude or expediency, to the complex impreſſion which remains in his mind, from the inducements that at different times inclined him to that practice. It is ſtill more reaſonable to believe that, when he ſets out, there is an expreſs volition, foreſight or apprehended motive inducing him to that particular action, and that he proceeds in ſuch a direction becauſe he knows it leads to the church. Now, ſo much of this action as proceeds from actually exiſting foreſight and apprehended motive, it is proper to call perfectly voluntary. So much as proceeds upon a motive, out of ſight and the operation of which depends upon habit is imperfectly voluntary.

This ſort of habit however muſt be admitted to retain ſomething of the nature of voluntarineſs for two reaſons. Firſt, it proceeds upon judgment, or apprehended motives, though the reaſons of that judgment be out of ſight and forgotten; at the time the individual performed the firſt action of the kind, his proceeding was perfectly voluntary. Secondly, the cuſtom of language authoriſe us in denominating every action as in ſome degree voluntary, which a volition, foreſight or apprehended motive in a contrary direction might have prevented from taking place.

Perhaps no action of a man arrived at years of maturity is, in the sense above defined, perfectly voluntary as there is no demonstration in the higher branches of the mathematics, which contains the whole of its proof within itself, and does not depend upon former propositions, the proofs of which are not present to the mind of the learner. The subtlety of the human mind in this respect is incredible. Many single actions, if carefully analysed and traced to their remotest source, would be found to be the complex result of different motives, to the amount perhaps of some hundreds.

In the mean time it is obvious to remark, that the perfection of the human character consists in approaching as nearly as possible to the perfectly voluntary state. We ought to be upon all occasions prepared to render a reason of our actions. We should remove ourselves to the farthest distance from the state of mere inanimate machines acted upon by causes of which they have no understanding. We should be cautious of thinking it a sufficient reason for an action, that we are accustomed to perform it, and that we once thought it right. The human understanding has so powerful a tendency to improvement, that it is more than probable that in many instances the arguments which once appeared to us sufficient, would upon re-examination appear indequate and futile. We should therefore subject them to perpetual revisal. In our speculative opinions and our practical principles we should never consider the book of enquiry as shut. We should accustom ourselves not to forget the reasons that produced our determination, but be ready upon all occasions clearly to announce and fully to enumerate them.

Having thus explained the nature of human actions, involuntary, imperfectly voluntary, and voluntary, let us consider how far this explanation affects the doctrine of the present chapter. Now it should seem that the great practical political principle remains as entire as ever. Still volition and foresight, in their strict and

accurate conſtruction, are inſeparable. All the moſt important occaſions of our lives are capable of being ſubjected at pleaſure to a deciſion, as nearly as poſſible, perfectly voluntary. Still it remains true that, when the underſtanding clearly perceives rectitude, propriety and eligibility to belong to a certain conduct, and ſo long as it has that perception, that conduct will infallibly be adopted. A perception of truth will inevitably be produced by a clear evidence brought home to the underſtanding, and the conſtancy of the perception will be proportioned to the apprehended value of the thing perceived. Reaſon therefore and conviction ſtill appear to be the proper inſtrument, and the ſufficient inſtrument for regulating the actions of mankind.

Having ſufficiently eſtabliſhed the principle, that in all caſes of volition we act not from impulſe, but opinion, there is a farther obſtacle to be removed, before this reaſoning can be uſefully applied to the ſubject of political melioration. It may be objected by a perſon who ſhould admit the force of the above arguments, "that little was gained by this expoſition to the cauſe it was intended to promote. Whether or no the actions of men frequently ariſe, as ſome authors have aſſerted, from immediate impreſſion, it cannot however be denied that the perturbations of ſenſe frequently ſeduce the judgment, and that the ideas and temporary notions they produce are too ſtrong for any force that can be brought againſt them. But, what man is now in this reſpect, he will always to a certain degree remain. He will always have ſenſes, and, in ſpite of all the attempts which can be made to mortify them, their pleaſures will aways be accompanied with irritation and alurement. Hence it appears, that all ideas of vaſt and extraordinary improvement in man are viſionary, that he will always remain in ſome degree the dupe of illuſion, and that reaſon, and abſolute, impartial truth, can never hope to poſſeſs him entire."

The firſt obſervation that ſuggeſts itſelf upon this ſtatement is, that the points already eſtabliſhed tend in ſome degree to ſet this new queſtion in a clearer light. From them it may be inferred that the contending forces of reaſon and ſenſe, in the power they exerciſe over our conduct, at leaſt paſs through the ſame medium, and aſſume the ſame form. It is opinion contending with opinion, and judgment with judgment; and this conſideration is not unattended with encouragement. When we diſcourſe of the comparative powers of appetite and reaſon, we ſpeak of thoſe actions, which have the conſent of the mind, and partake of the nature of voluntary. The queſtion neither is nor deſerves to be, reſpecting caſes where no choice is exerted and no preference ſhown. Every man is aware, that the caſes, into which volition enters either for a part or the whole, are ſufficiently numerous, to decide upon all that is moſt important in the events of our life. It follows therefore that, in the contention of ſenſe and reaſon, it cannot be improbable to hope that the opinion which is intrinſically the beſt founded ſhall ultimately prevail.

But let us examine a little minutely theſe pleaſures of ſenſe, the attractions of which are ſuppoſed to be ſo irreſiſtible. In reality they are in no way enabled to maintain their hold upon us, but by means of the adſcititious ornaments with which they are aſſiduouſly connected. Reduce them to their true nakedneſs, and they would be generally deſpiſed. Where almoſt is the man, who would ſit down with impatient eagerneſs to the moſt ſplendid feaſt, the moſt exquiſite viands and highly flavoured wines, "taſte after taſte upheld with kindlieſt change," if he muſt ſit down alone and it were not relieved and aſſiſted by the more exalted charms of ſociety, converſation and mutual benevolence? Strip the commerce of the ſexes of all its attendant circumſtances; and the effect would be ſimilar. Tell a man that all women, ſo far as ſenſe

is concerned, are nearly alike. Bid him therefore take a partner without any attention to the ſymmetry of her perſon, her vivacity, the voluptuous ſoftneſs of her temper, the affectionate kindneſs of her feelings, her imagination or her wit. You would probably inſtantly convince him that the commerce itſelf, which by ſuperficial obſervers is put for the whole, is the leaſt important branch of the complicated conſideration to which it belongs. It is probable that he who ſhould form himſelf with the greateſt care upon a ſyſtem of ſolitary ſenſualiſm, would come at laſt to a deciſion not very different from that which Epicurus is ſaid to have adopted, in favour of freſh herbs and water from the ſpring.

"But let it be confeſſed that the pleaſures of ſenſe are unimportant and trivial. It is next to be aſked, whether, trifling as they are, they may not nevertheleſs poſſeſs a deluſive and treacherous power, by means of which they may often be enabled to overcome every oppoſition?"

The better to determine this queſtion, let us ſuppoſe a man to be engaged in the progreſſive voluptuouſneſs of the moſt ſenſual ſcene. Here, if ever, we may expect ſenſation to be triumphant. Paſſion is in this caſe in its full career. He impatiently ſhuts out every conſideration that may diſturb his enjoyment; moral views and diſſuaſives can no longer obtrude themſelves into his mind; he reſigns himſelf, without power of reſiſtance, to his predominant idea. Alas, in this ſituation nothing is ſo eaſy as to extinguiſh his ſenſuality! Tell him at this moment that his father is dead, that he has loſt or gained a conſiderable ſum of money, or even perhaps that his favourite horſe is ſtolen from the meadow, and his whole paſſion ſhall be inſtantly annihilated: So vaſt is the power which a mere propoſition poſſeſſes over the mind of man. So conſcious are we of the precarioufneſs of the faſcination of the ſenſes, that upon ſuch occaſions we provide againſt the ſlighteſt inter-

ruption. If our little finger ached, we might probably immediately bid adieu to the empire of this supposed almighty power. It is said to be an experiment successfully made by sailors and persons in that class of society, to lay a wager with their comrades that the sexual intercourse shall not take place between them and their bedfellow the ensuing night, and to trust to their veracity for a confession of the event. The only means probably by which any man ever succeeds in indulging the pleasures of sense, in contradiction to the habitual persuasion of his judgment, is by contriving to forget every thing that can be offered against them. If notwithstanding all his endeavours the unwished for idea intrudes, the indulgence instantly becomes impossible. Is it to be supposed that that power of sensual allurement, which must be carefully kept alive, and which the slightest accident overthrows, can be invincible only to the artillery of reason, and that the most irresistible considerations of justice, interest and happiness will never be able habitually to control it?

To consider the subject in another point of view. It seems to be a strange absurdity, to hear men assert that the attractions of sensual pleasure are irresistible, in contradiction to the multiplied experience of all ages and countries. Are all good stories of our nature false? Did no man ever resist temptation? On the contrary, have not all the considerations which have power over our hopes, our fears, or our weaknesses been, in competition with a firm and manly virtue, employed in vain? But what has been done, may be done again. What has been done by individuals, cannot be impossible, in a widely different state of society, to be done by the whole species.

The system we are here combating, of the irresistible power of sensual allurements, has been numerously supported, and a variety of arguments has been adduced in its behalf. Among other things it has been remarked, "that, as the human mind has no

innate and original principles, ſo all the information it has, is derived from ſenſation; and every thing that paſſes within it, is either direct impreſſion upon our external organs, or the ſubſtance of ſuch impreſſions modified and refined through certain intellectual ſtrainers and alembics. It is therefore reaſonable to conclude, that the original ſubſtance ſhould be moſt powerful in its properties, and the pleaſures of external ſenſe more genuine than any other pleaſure. Every ſenſation is by its very nature accompanied with the idea of pleaſure or pain in a vigorous or feeble degree. The only thing which can or ought to excite deſire, is happineſs or agreeable ſenſation. It is impoſſible that the hand can be ſtretched out to obtain any thing, except ſo far as it is conſidered as deſirable; and to be deſirable is the ſame thing as to have a tendency to communicate pleaſure. Thus after all the complexities of philoſophy, we are brought back to this ſimple and irreſiſtible propoſition, that man is an animal purely ſenſual. Hence it follows that in all his tranſactions much muſt depend upon immediate impreſſion, and little is to be attributed to the generalities of ratiocination."

All the premiſes in the objection here ſtated are unqueſtionably true. Man is juſt ſuch an animal as the objection deſcribes. Every thing within him that has a tendency to voluntary action is an affair of external or internal ſenſe, and has relation to pleaſure or pain. But it does not follow from hence, that the pleaſures of our external organs are more exquiſite than any other pleaſures. It is by no means unexampled for the reſult of a combination of materials to be more excellent than the materials themſelves. Let us conſider the materials by means of which an admirable poem, or, if you will, the author of an admirable poem, is conſtructed, and we ſhall immediately acknowledge this to be the caſe. In reality the pleaſures of a ſavage, or, which is much the ſame thing, of a brute, are feeble indeed compared with thoſe of

the man of civiliſation and refinement. Our ſenſual pleaſures, commonly ſo called, would be almoſt univerſally deſpiſed, had we not the art to combine them with the pleaſures of intellect and cultivation. No man ever performed an act of exalted benevolence, without having ſufficient reaſon to know, at leaſt ſo long as the ſenſation was preſent to his mind, that all the gratifications of appetite were contemptible in the compariſon. That which gives the laſt zeſt to our enjoyments, is the approbation of our own minds, the conſciouſneſs that the exertion we have made was ſuch as was called for by impartial juſtice and reaſon; and this conſciouſneſs will be clear and ſatisfying in proportion as our deciſion in that reſpect is unmixed with error. Our perceptions can never be ſo luminous and accurate in the belief of falſhood as of truth.

The great advantage poſſeſſed by the allurements of ſenſe is, "that the ideas ſuggeſted by them are definite and preciſe, while thoſe which deal in generalities are apt to be faint and obſcure. The difference is like that between things abſent and preſent; of the recommendations poſſeſſed by the latter we have a more vivid perception, and ſeem to have a better aſſurance of the probability of their attainment. Theſe circumſtances muſt neceſſarily, in the compariſon inſtituted by the mind in all ſimilar caſes, to a certain degree incline the balance towards that ſide. Add to which, that what is preſent forces itſelf upon our attention, while that which is abſent depends for its recurrence upon the capriciouſneſs of memory."

But theſe advantages are ſeen upon the very face of them to be of a precarious nature. If my ideas of virtue, benevolence and juſtice, or whatever it is that ought to reſtrain me from an improper leaning to the pleaſures of ſenſe, be now leſs definite and preciſe, they may be gradually and unlimitedly improved. If I do not now ſufficiently perceive all the recommendations they poſſeſs, and their clear ſuperiority over the allurements of ſenſe, there is ſurely no natural impoſſibility in my be-

ing made to understand a distinct proposition, or in my being fully convinced by an unanswerable argument. As to recollection, that is certainly a faculty of the mind which is capable of improvement; and the point, of which I have been once intimately convinced and have had a lively and profound impression, will not easily be forgotten when the period of action shall arrive.

It has been said "that a rainy day will frequently convert a man of valour into a coward." If that should be the case, there is no presumption in affirming that his courage was built upon very slight and inadequate motives. How long would a sensation of this kind be able to hold out against the idea of the benefits to arise from his valour, safety to his family and children, defeat to an unjust and formidable assailant, and freedom and felicity to be secured to his country? In reality, the atmosphere, instead of considerably affecting the mass of mankind, affects in an eniment degree only a small part of that mass. The majority are either above or below it; are either too gross to feel strongly these minute variations, or too busy to attend to them. The case is to a considerable degree the same with the rest of our animal sensations. "Indigestion," it has been said, "perhaps a fit of the tooth ach, renders a man incapable of strong thinking and spirited exertion." How far would they be able to maintain their ground against an unexpected piece of intelligence of the most delightful nature?

Pain is probably more formidable in its attacks upon us, and more exquisitely felt than any species of bodily pleasure. Yet all history affords us examples, where pain has been contemned and defied by the energies of intellectual resolution. Do we not read of Mutius Scævola who suffered his hand to be destroyed by fire without betraying any symptom of emotion, and archbishop Cranmer who endured the same trial two hundred years ago in our own country? Is it not recorded of Anaxarchus that, while suffering the most

excruciating tortures, he exclaimed, "Beat on, tyrant! Thou mayeſt deſtroy the ſhell of Anaxarchus, but thou canſt not touch Anaxarchus himſelf?" The very ſavage Indians ſing amidſt the wanton tortures that are inflicted on them, and tauntingly provoke their tormentors to more ingenious cruelty. When we read ſuch ſtories, we recogniſe in them the genuine characteriſtics of man. Man is not a vegetable to be governed by ſenſations of heat and cold, dryneſs and moiſture. He is a reaſonable creature, capable of perceiving what is eligible and right, of fixing indelibly certain principles upon his mind, and adhering inflexibly to the reſolutions he has made.

Let us attend for a moment to the general reſult of the preceding diſcuſſions. The tendency of the whole is to aſcertain an important principle in the ſcience of the human mind. If the arguments here adduced be admitted to be valid, it neceſſarily follows, that whatever can be adequately brought home to the conviction of the underſtanding, may be depended upon as affording a ſecure hold upon the conduct. We are no longer at liberty to conſider man as divided between two independent principles, or to imagine that his inclinations are in any caſe inacceſſible through the medium of his reaſon. We find the thinking principle within us to be uniform and ſimple; in conſequence of which we are intitled to conclude, that it is in every reſpect the proper ſubject of education and perſuaſion, and is ſuſceptible of unlimited improvement. There is no conduct in itſelf reaſonable, which the refutation of error, and diſſipating of uncertainty, will not make appear to be ſuch. There is no conduct which can be ſhewn to be reaſonable, the reaſons of which may not ſooner or later be made impreſſive, irreſiſtible, and matter of habitual recollection. Laſtly, there is no conduct, the reaſons of which are thus concluſive and thus communicated, which will not infallibly and uniformly be adopted by the man to whom they are communicated.

It may not be improper to attend a little to the light which may be derived from these speculations upon certain maxims, almost universally received, but which, as they convey no distinct ideas, may be productive of mischief, and can scarcely be productive of good.

The first of these is, that the passions ought to be purified, but not to be eradicated. Another, conveying nearly the same lesson, but indifferent words, is, that passion is not to be conquered by reason, but by bringing some other passion into contention with it.

The word passion is a term extremely vague in its signification. It is used principally in three senses. It either represents the ardour and vehemence of mind with which any object is pursued; or secondly, that temporary persuasion of excellence and desirableness, which accompanies any action performed by us contrary to our more customary and usual habits of thinking; or lastly, those external modes or necessities to which the whole human species is alike subject, such as hunger, the passion between the sexes, and others. In which of these senses is the word to be understood in the maxims above stated?

In the first sense it has sufficiently appeared that none of our sensations, or, which is the same thing, none of our ideas, are unaccompanied with a consciousness of pleasure or pain; consequently all our volitions are attended with complacence or aversion. In this sense without all doubt passion cannot be eradicated; but in this sense also passion is so far from being incompatible with reason, that it is inseparable from it. Virtue, sincerity, justice, and all those principles which are begotten and cherished in us by a due exercise of reason, will never be very strenuously espoused, till they are ardently loved; that is, till their value is clearly perceived and adequately understood. In this sense nothing is necessary, but to show us that a thing is truly good and worthy to be desired, in order to excite in us a passion for its attainment. If therefore this be

the meaning of paſſion in the above propoſition, it is true that paſſion ought not to be eradicated, but it is equally true that it cannot be eradicated: it is true, that the only way to conquer one paſſion is by the introduction of another, but it is equally true that, if we employ our rational faculties, we cannot fail of thus conquering our erroneous propenſities. The maxims therefore are nugatory.

In the ſecond ſenſe our paſſions are ambition, avarice, the love of power, the love of fame, envy, revenge, and innumerable others. Miſerable indeed would be our condition, if we could only expel one bad paſſion by another of the ſame kind, and there was no way of rooting out deluſion from the mind, but by ſubſtituting another deluſion in its place. But it has been demonſtrated at large that this is not the caſe. Truth is not leſs powerful or leſs friendly to ardent exertion than error, and needs not fear its encounter. Falſhood is not, as ſuch a principle would ſuppoſe, the only element in which the human mind can exiſt, ſo that, if the ſpace which the mind occupies be too much rarefied and cleared, its exiſtence or health will be in ſome degree injured. On the contrary, we need not fear any ſiniſter conſequences, from the ſubverſion of error, and introducing as much truth into the mind as we can poſſibly accumulate. All thoſe notions by which we are accuſtomed to aſcribe to any thing a value which it does not really poſſeſs, ſhould be eradicated without mercy; and truth, a ſound and juſt eſtimate of things, which is not leſs favourable to zeal or activity, ſhould be earneſtly and inceſſantly cultivated.

In the third ſenſe of the word paſſion, as it deſcribes the reſult of thoſe circumſtances which are common to the whole ſpecies, ſuch as hunger and the propenſity to the intercourſe of the ſexes, it ſeems ſufficiently reaſonable to ſay that no attempt ought to be made to eradicate them. But this ſentiment was hardly worth the formality of a maxim. So far as theſe

propenſities ought to be conquered or reſtrained, there is no reaſon why this ſhould not be effected by the due exerciſe of the underſtanding. From theſe illuſtrations it is ſufficiently apparent, that the care recommended to us not to extinguiſh or ſeek to extinguiſh our paſſions, is founded in a confuſed or miſtaken view of the ſubject.

Another maxim not inferior in reputation to thoſe above recited, is that of following nature. But the term nature here, is ſtill more looſe and unintelligible than the term paſſion was before. If it be meant that we ought to accommodate ourſelves to hunger and the other appetites which are common to our ſpecies, this is probably true. But theſe appetites, ſome of them in particular, lead to exceſs, and the miſchief with which they are pregnant is to be corrected, not by conſulting our appetites, but our reaſon. If it be meant that we ſhould follow inſtinct, it has been proved that we have no inſtincts. The advocates of this maxim are apt to conſider whatever now exiſts among mankind as inherent and perpetual, and to conclude that this is to be maintained, not in proportion as it can be ſhown to be reaſonable, but becauſe it is natural. Thus it has been ſaid, that man is naturally a religious animal, and for this reaſon, and not in proportion to our power of demonſtrating the being of a God or the truth of Chriſtianity, religion is to be maintained. Thus again it has been called natural, that men ſhould form themſelves into immenſe tribes or nations, and go to war with each other. Thus perſons of narrow views and obſervation, regard every thing as natural and right, that happens, however capriciouſly or for however ſhort a time, to prevail in the ſociety in which they live. The only things which can be ſaid to compoſe the nature or conſtitution of man, are our external ſtructure, which itſelf is capable of being modified with indefinite variety; the appetites and impreſſions growing out of that ſtructure; and the capacity of combining ideas and inferring concluſions.

The appetites common to the ſpecies we cannot wholly deſtroy: the faculty of reaſon it would be abſurd ſyſtematically to counteract, ſince it is only by ſome ſort of reaſoning, bad or good, that we can ſo much as adopt any ſyſtem. In this ſenſe therefore no doubt we ought to follow nature, that is, to employ our underſtandings and increaſe our diſcernment. But, by conforming ourſelves to the principles of our conſtitution in this reſpect, we moſt effectually exclude all following, or implicit aſſent. If we would fully comport ourſelves in a manner correſpondent to our properties and powers, we muſt bring every thing to the ſtandard of reaſon. Nothing muſt be admitted either as principle or precept, that will not ſupport this trial. Nothing muſt be ſuſtained, becauſe it is ancient, becauſe we have been accuſtomed to regard it as ſacred, or becauſe it has been unuſual to bring its validity into queſtion. Finally, if by following nature be underſtood that we muſt fix our preference upon things that will conduce to human happineſs, in this there is ſome truth. But the truth it contains is extremely darkened by the phraſeology in which it is couched. We muſt conſider our external ſtructure, ſo far as relates to the mere queſtion of our preſervation. As to the reſt, whatever will make a reaſonable nature happy will make us happy; and our preference ought to be beſtowed upon that ſpecies of pleaſure which has moſt independence and moſt animation.

The corollaries reſpecting political truth, deducible from the ſimple propoſition, which ſeems clearly eſtabliſhed by the reaſonings of the preſent chapter, that the voluntary actions of men are in all inſtances conformable to the deductions of their underſtanding, are of the higheſt importance. Hence we may infer what are the hopes and proſpects of human improvement. The doctrine which may be founded upon theſe principles, may perhaps beſt be expreſſed in the five following propoſitions: Sound reaſoning and truth, when adequately communicated, muſt always be vic-

torious over error: Sound reasoning and truth are capable of being so communicated: Truth is omnipotent: The vices and moral weakness of man are not invincible: Man is perfectible, or in other words susceptible of perpetual improvement.

These propositions will be found in part synonimous with each other. But the time of the enquirer will not be unprofitably spent in copiously clearing up the foundations of moral and political system. It is extremely beneficial that truth should be viewed on all sides, and examined under different aspects. The propositions are even little more than so many different modes of stating the principal topic of this chapter. But, if they will not admit each of a distinct train of arguments in its support, it may not however be useless to bestow upon each a short illustration.

The first of these propositions is so evident, that it needs only be stated in order to the being universally admitted. Is there any one who can imagine that when sound argument and sophistry are fairly brought into comparison, the victory can be doubtful? Sophistry may assume a plausible appearance, and contrive to a certain extent to bewilder the understanding. But it is one of the prerogatives of truth to follow it in its mazes and strip it of disguise. Nor does any difficulty from this consideration interfere with the establishment of the present proposition. We suppose truth not merely to be exhibited, but adequately communicated; that is in other words, distinctly apprehended by the person to whom it is addressed. In this case the victory is too sure to admit of being controverted by the most inveterate scepticism.

The second proposition is, that sound reasoning and truth are capable of being adequately communicated by one man to another. This proposition may be understood of such communication, either as it affects the individual or the species. First of the individual.

In order to its due application in this point of view, opportunity for the communication must necessarily be

ſuppoſed. The incapacity of human intellect at preſent requires that this opportunity ſhould be of long duration or repeated recurrence. We do not always know how to communicate all the evidence we are capable of communicating, in a ſingle converſation, and much leſs in a ſingle inſtant. But if the communicator be ſufficiently maſter of his ſubject, and if the truth be altogether on his ſide, he muſt ultimately ſucceed in his undertaking. We ſuppoſe him to have ſufficient urbanity to conciliate the good will, and ſufficient energy to engage the attention of the party concerned. In that caſe there is no prejudice, no blind reverence for eſtabliſhed ſyſtems, no falſe fear of the inferences to be drawn, that can reſiſt him. He will encounter theſe one after the other, and he will encounter them with ſucceſs. Our prejudices, our undue reverence and imaginary fears flow out of ſome views the mind has been induced to entertain; they are founded in the belief of ſome propoſitions. But every one of theſe propoſitions is capable of being refuted. The champion we deſcribe proceeds from point to point; if in any his ſucceſs have been doubtful, that he will retrace and put out of the reach of miſtake; and it is evidently impoſſible that with ſuch qualifications and ſuch perſeverance he ſhould not ultimately accompliſh his purpoſe.

Such is the appearance which this propoſition aſſumes when examined in a looſe and practical view. In ſtrict conſideration it will not admit of debate. Man is a rational being. If there be any man, who is incapable of making inferences for himſelf, or underſtanding, when ſtated in the moſt explicit terms, the inferences of another, him we conſider as an abortive production, and not in ſtrictneſs belonging to the human ſpecies. It is abſurd therefore to ſay that ſound reaſoning and truth cannot be communicated by one man to another. Whenever in any caſe he fails, it is that he is not ſufficiently laborious, patient and clear. We

ſuppoſe of courſe the perſon who undertakes to communicate the truth, really to poſſeſs it, and be maſter of his ſubject; for it is ſcarcely worth an obſervation to ſay, that that which he has not himſelf, he cannot communicate to another.

If truth therefore can be brought home to the conviction of the individual, let us ſee how it ſtands with the public or the world. Now in the firſt place, it is extremely clear that if no individual can reſiſt the force of truth it can only be neceſſary to apply this propoſition from individual to individual, and we ſhall at length comprehend the whole. Thus the affirmation in its literal ſenſe is completely eſtabliſhed.

With reſpect to the chance of ſucceſs, this will depend, firſt, upon the precluding all extraordinary convulſions of nature, and after this upon the activity and energy of thoſe to whoſe hands the ſacred cauſe of truth may be intruſted. It is apparent that if juſtice be done to its merits, it includes in it the indeſtructible germ of ultimate victory. Every new convert that is made to its cauſe, if he be taught its excellence as well as its reality, is a freſh apoſtle to extend its illuminations through a wider ſphere. In this reſpect it reſembles the motion of a falling body, which increaſes its rapidity in proportion to the ſquares of the diſtances. Add to which, that, when a convert to truth has been adequately informed, it is barely poſſible that he ſhould ever fail in his adherence; whereas error contains in it the principle of its own mortality. Thus the advocates of falſhood and miſtake muſt continually diminiſh, and the well informed adherents of truth inceſſantly multiply.

It has ſometimes been affirmed that, whenever a queſtion is ably brought forward for examination the deciſion of the human ſpecies muſt ultimately be on the right ſide. But this propoſition is to be underſtood with allowances. Civil policy, magnificent emoluments and ſiniſter motives may upon many occaſions, by diſtracting the attention, cauſe the worſe

reaſon to paſs as if it were the better. It is not abſolutely certain that, in the controverſy brought forward by Clarke and Whiſton againſt the doctrine of the Trinity, or by Collins and Woolſton againſt the Chriſtian revelation, the innovators had altogether the worſt of the argument. Yet fifty years after the agitation of theſe controverſies, their effects could ſcarcely be traced, and things appeared on all ſides as if the controverſies had never exiſted. Perhaps it will be ſaid that, though the effects of truth may be obſcured for a time, they will break out in the ſequel with double luſtre. But this at leaſt depends upon circumſtances. No comet muſt come in the mean time, and ſweep away the human ſpecies: no Attila muſt have it in his power once again to lead back the flood of barbariſm to deluge the civiliſed world: and the diſciples or at leaſt the books of the original champions muſt remain, or their diſcoveries and demonſtrations muſt be nearly loſt upon the world.

The third of the propoſitions enumerated is, that truth is omnipotent. This propoſition, which is convenient for its brevity, muſt be underſtood with limitations. It would be abſurd to affirm that truth, unaccompanied by the evidence which proves it to be ſuch, or when that evidence is partially and imperfectly ſtated, has any ſuch property. But it has ſufficiently appeared from the arguments already adduced, that truth, when adequately communicated, is, ſo far as relates to the conviction of the underſtanding, irreſiſtible. There may indeed be propoſitions, which, though true in themſelves, may be beyond the ſphere of human knowledge, or reſpecting which human beings have not yet diſcovered ſufficient arguments for their ſupport. In that caſe, though true in themſelves, they are not truths to us. The reaſoning by which they are attempted to be eſtabliſhed, is not ſound reaſoning. It may perhaps be found that the human mind is not capable of arriving at abſolute certainty upon any ſubject of en-

quiry; and it must be admitted that human science is attended with all degrees of certainty, from the highest moral evidence to the slightest balance of probability. But human beings are capable of apprehending and weighing all these degrees; and to know the exact quantity of probability which I ought to ascribe to any proposition, may be said to be in one sense the possessing certain knowledge. It would farther be absurd, if we regard truth in relation to its empire over our conduct, to suppose that it is not limited in its operations by the faculties of our frame. It may be compared to a connoisseur, who, however consummate be his talents, can extract from a given instrument only such tones as that instrument will afford. But within these limits the deduction which forms the principal substance of this chapter, proves to us that whatever is brought home to the conviction of the understanding, so long as it is present to the mind, possesses an undisputed empire over the conduct. Nor will he who is sufficiently conversant with the science of intellect, be hasty in assigning the bounds of our capacity. There are some things which the structure of our bodies will render us for ever unable to effect; but in many cases the lines, which appear to prescribe a term to our efforts, will, like the mists that arise from a lake, retire farther and farther, the more closely we endeavour to approach them.

Fourthly, the vices and moral weakness of man are not invincible. This is the preceding proposition with a very slight variation in the statement. Vice and weakness are founded upon ignorance and error; but truth is more powerful than any champion that can be brought into the field against it; consequently truth has the faculty of expelling weakness and vice, and placing nobler and more beneficent principles in their stead.

Lastly, man is perfectible. This proposition needs some explanation.

By perfectible it is not meant that he is capable of being brought to perfection. But the word seems sufficiently adapted to express the faculty of being continually made better and receiving perpetual improvement; and in this sense it is here to be understood. The term perfectible, thus explained, not only does not imply the capacity of being brought to perfection, but stands in express opposition to it. If we could arrive at perfection, there would be an end of our improvement. There is however one thing of great importance that it does imply; every perfection or excellence that human beings are competent to conceive, human beings, unless in cases that are palpably and unequivocally excluded by the structure of their frame, are competent to attain.

This is an inference which immediately follows from the omnipotence of truth. Every truth that is capable of being communicated, is capable of being brought home to the conviction of the mind. Every principle which can be brought home to the conviction of the mind, will infallibly produce a correspondent effect upon the conduct. If there were not something in the nature of man incompatible with absolute perfection, the doctrine of the omnipotence of truth would afford no small probability that he would one day reach it. Why is the perfection of man impossible?

The idea of absolute perfection is scarcely within the grasp of human understanding. If science were more familiarised to speculations of this sort, we should perhaps discover that the notion itself was pregnant with absurdity and contradiction.

It is not necessary in this argument to dwell upon the limited nature of the human faculties. We can neither be present to all places nor to all times. We cannot penetrate into the essences of things, or rather we have no sound and satisfactory knowledge of things external to ourselves, but merely of our own sensations. We cannot discover the causes of things,

or ascertain that in the antecedent which connects it with the consequent, and discern nothing but their contiguity*. With what pretence can a being thus shut in on all sides lay claim to absolute perfection?

But, not to insist upon these considerations, there is one principle in the human mind, which must for ever exclude us from arriving at a close of our acquisitions, and confine us to perpetual progress. The human mind, so far as we are acquainted with it, is nothing else but a faculty of perception. All our knowledge, all our ideas, every thing we possess as intelligent beings, comes from impression. All the minds that exist set out from absolute ignorance. They received first one impression, and then a second. As the impressions became more numerous, and were stored by the help of memory, and combined by the faculty of association, so the experience increased, and with the experience the knowledge, the wisdom, every thing that distinguishes man from what we understand by a "clod of the valley." This seems to be a simple and incontrovertible history of intellectual being; and, if it be true, then as our accumulations have been incessant in the time that is gone, so, as long as we continue to perceive, to remember or reflect, they must perpetually increase.

CHAP. VI.

OF THE INFLUENCE OF CLIMATE.

Means by which liberty is to be introduced.—Their efficacy illustrated.—Facts in confirmation of these reasonings.—Inference.

TWO points farther are necessary to be illustrated, in order to render our view of man in his social capacity impartial and complete. There are certain

* *Book* IV, *Chap.* V.

phyſical cauſes which have commonly been ſuppoſed to oppoſe a palpable barrier to the political improvement of our ſpecies: climate, which is imagined to render the introduction of liberal principles upon this ſubject in ſome caſes impoſſible: and luxury, which, in addition to this diſqualification, precludes their revival even in countries where they had once moſt eminently flouriſhed.

An anſwer to both theſe objections is included in what has been offered upon the ſubject of the voluntary actions of man. If truth when properly diſplayed be omnipotent, then neither climate nor luxury are invincible obſtacles. But ſo much ſtreſs has been laid upon theſe topics, and they have been ſo eloquently inforced by poets and men like poets, that it ſeems neceſſary to beſtow upon them a diſtinct examination.

"It is impoſſible," ſay ſome, "to eſtabliſh a ſyſtem of political liberty in certain warm and effeminate climates." To enable us to judge of the reaſonableneſs of this affirmation, let us conſider what proceſs would be neceſſary in order to introduce political liberty into any country.

The anſwer to this queſtion is to be found in the anſwer to that other, whether freedom have any real and ſolid advantages over ſlavery? If it have, then our mode of proceeding reſpecting it ought to be exactly parallel to that we ſhould employ in recommending any other benefit. If I would perſuade a man to accept a great eſtate, ſuppoſing that poſſeſſion to be a real advantage; if I would induce him to ſelect for his companion a beautiful and accompliſhed woman, or for his friend a wiſe, a brave and diſintereſted man; if I would perſuade him to prefer eaſe to pain, and gratification to torture, what more is neceſſary, than that I ſhould inform his underſtanding, and make him ſee theſe things in their true and genuine colours? Should I find it neceſſary to enquire firſt of what climate he was a native, and whether that were favourable to the poſſeſſion of a great eſtate, a fine woman, or a generous friend?

The advantages of liberty over ſlavery are not leſs real, though unfortunately they have been made leſs palpable in their application to the welfare of communities at large, than the advantages to accure in the caſes above enumerated. Every man has a confuſed ſenſe of the real ſtate of the queſtion, but he has been taught to believe that men would tear each other to pieces, if they had not prieſts to direct their conſciences, lords to conſult for their tranquillity, and kings to pilot them in ſafety through the dangers of the political ocean. But whether they be miſled by theſe or other prejudices, whatever be the fancied terror that induces them quietly to ſubmit to have their hands bound behind them, and the ſcourge vibrated over their heads, all theſe are queſtions of reaſon. Truth may be preſented to them in ſuch irreſiſtible evidence, perhaps by ſuch juſt degrees familiariſed to their apprehenſion, as ultimately to conquer the moſt obſtinate prepoſſeſſions. Let the preſs find its way into Perſia or Indoſtan, let the political truths diſcovered by the beſt of the European ſages be transfuſed into their language, and it is impoſſible that a few ſolitary converts ſhould not be made. It is the property of truth to ſpread; and, excluſively of any powerful counteraction, its advocates in each ſucceeding year will be ſomewhat more numerous than in that which went before. The cauſes, which ſuſpend its progreſs, ariſe, not from climate, but from the watchful and intolerant jealouſy of deſpotic ſovereigns.—What is here ſtated is in fact little more than a branch of the principle which has been ſo generally recogniſed, "that government is founded in opinion*."

Let us ſuppoſe then that the majority of a nation by however ſlow a progreſs are convinced of the deſirableneſs, or, which amounts to the ſame, the practicability of freedom. The ſuppoſition would be parallel, if we were to imagine ten thouſand men of ſound in-

* *Hume's Eſſays, Part* I, *Eſſay* iv.

tellect, shut up in a madhouse, and superintended by a set of three or four keepers. Hitherto they have been persuaded, for what absurdity has been too great for human intellect to entertain? that they were destitute of reason, and that the superintendence under which they were placed was necessary for their preservation. They have therefore submitted to whips and straw and bread and water, and perhaps imagined this tyranny to be a blessing. But a suspicion is at length by some means propagated among them, that all they have hitherto endured has been an imposition. The suspicion spreads, they reflect, they reason, the idea is communicated from one to another through the chinks of their cells, and at certain times when the vigilance of their keepers has not precluded them from mutual society. It becomes the clear perception, the settled persuasion of the majority of the persons confined.

What will be the consequence of this opinion? Will the influence of climate prevent them from embracing the obvious means of their happiness? Is there any human understanding that will not perceive a truth like this when forcibly and repeatedly presented? Is there a mind that will conceive no impatience of so horrible a tyranny? In reality the chains fall off of themselves, when the magic of opinion is dissolved. When a great majority of any society are persuaded to secure any benefit to themselves, there is no need of tumult or violence to effect it. The effort would be to resist reason, not to obey it. The prisoners are collected in their common hall, and the keepers inform them that it is time to return to their cells. They have no longer the power to obey. They look at the impotence of their late masters, and smile at their presumption. They quietly leave the mansion where they were hitherto immured, and partake of the blessings of light and air like other men.

It may perhaps be useful to consider how far these reasonings upon the subject of liberty, are confirmed

to us by general experience as to the comparative inefficacy of climate, and the ſuperior influence of circumſtances, political and ſocial. The following inſtances are for the moſt part abridged from the judicious collections of Hume upon the ſubject*.

1. If the theory here aſſerted be true, we may expect to find the inhabitants of neighbouring provinces in different ſtates, widely diſcriminated by the influence of government, and little aſſimilated by reſemblance of climate. Thus the Gaſcons are the gayeſt people in France; but the moment we paſs the Pyrenees, we find the ſerious and ſaturnine character of the Spaniard. Thus the Athenians were lively, penetrating and ingenious, but the Thebans unpoliſhed, phlegmatic and dull. 2. It would be reaſonable to expect that different races of men, intermixed with each other, but differently governed, would afford a ſtrong and viſible contraſt. Thus the Turks are brave, open and ſincere, but the modern Greeks mean, cowardly and deceitful. 3. Wandering tribes cloſely connected among themſelves, and having little ſympathy with the people with whom they reſide, may be expected to have great ſimilarity of manners. Their ſituation renders them conſpicuous, the faults of individuals reflect diſhonour upon the whole, and their manners will be particularly ſober and reputable, unleſs they ſhould happen to labour under ſo peculiar an odium as to render all endeavour after reputation fruitleſs. Thus the Armenians in the Eaſt are as univerſally diſtinguiſhed among the nations with whom they reſide, as the Jews in Europe; but the Armenians are noted for probity, and the Jews for extortion. 4. What reſemblance is there between the ancient and the modern Greeks, between the old Romans and the preſent inhabitants of Italy, between the Gauls and the French? Diodorous Siculus deſcribes the Gauls as particularly given to taciturnity, and Ariſtotle

* *Eſſays; Part* I. *Eſſay* xxi.

affirms that they are the only warlike nation who are negligent of women.

If on the contrary climate were principally concerned in forming the characters of nations, we might expect to find heat and cold producing an extraordinary effect upon men, as they do upon plants and inferior adimals. But the reverse of this appears to be the fact. Is it supposed that the neighbourhood of the sun renders men gay, fantastic and ingenious? While the French, the Greeks and the Persians have been remarkable for their gaiety, the Spaniards, the Turks and the Chinese are not less distinguished by the seriousness of their deportment. It was the opinion of the ancients that the northern nations were incapable of civilization and improvement; but the moderns have found that the English are not inferior in literary eminence to any nation in the world. Is it asserted that the northern nations are more hardy and courageous, and that conquest has usually travelled from that to the opposite quarter? It would have been truer to say that conquest is usually made by poverty upon plenty. The Turks, who from the deserts of Tartary invaded the fertile provinces of the Roman empire, met the Saracens half way, who were advancing with similar views from the no less dreary deserts of Arabia. In their extreme perhaps heat and cold may determine the characters of nations, of the negroes for example on one side, and the Laplanders on the other. Not but that in this very instance much may be ascribed to the wretchedness of a sterile climate on the one hand, and to the indolence consequent upon a spontaneous fertility on the other. As to what is more than this, the remedy has not yet been discovered. Physical causes have already appeared to be powerful, till moral ones can be brought into operation.

Has it been alleged that carnivorous nations are endowed with the greatest courage? The Swedes, whose nutriment is meagre and sparing, have ranked with

the moſt diſtinguiſhed modern nations in the operations of war.

It is uſually ſaid, that northern nations are moſt addicted to wine, and ſouthern to women. Admitting this obſervation in its full force, it would only prove that climate may operate upon the groſſer particles of our frame, not that it influences thoſe finer organs upon which the operations of intellect depend. But the truth of the firſt of theſe remarks may well be doubted. The Greeks appear to have been ſufficiently addicted to the pleaſures of the bottle. Among the the Perſians no character was more coveted than that of a hard drinker. It is eaſy to obtain any thing of the negroes, even their wives and children, in exchange for liquor.

As to women the circumſtance may be accounted for from moral cauſes. The heat of the climate obliges both ſexes to go half naked. The animal arrives ſooner at maturity in hot countries. And both theſe circumſtances produce vigilance and jealouſy, cauſes which inevitably tend to inflame the paſſions.

The reſult of theſe reaſonings is of the utmoſt importance to him who ſpeculates upon principles of government. There have been writers on this ſubject, who, admitting, and even occaſionally declaiming with enthuſiaſm upon the advantages of liberty and the equal claims of mankind to every ſocial benefit, have yet concluded, "that the corruptions of deſpotiſm and the uſurpations of ariſtocracy were congenial to certain ages and diviſions of the world, and under proper limitations entitled to our approbation." But this hypotheſis will be found unable to endure the teſt of ſerious reflection. There is no ſtate of mankind that renders them incapable of the exerciſe of reaſon. There is no period in which it is neceſſary to hold the human ſpecies in a condition of pupillage. If there were, it would ſeem but reaſonable that their ſuperintendents and guardians, as in the caſe of infants of another ſort, ſhould provide for the means of their

ſubſiſtence without calling upon them for the exertions of their own underſtanding. Wherever men are competent to look the firſt duties of humanity in the face, and to provide for their defence againſt the invaſions of hunger and the inclemencies of the ſky, it can ſcarcely be thought that they are not equally capable of every other exertion that may be eſſential to their ſecurity and welfare.

The real enemies of liberty in any country are not the people, but thoſe higher orders who find their imaginary profit in a contrary ſyſtem. Infuſe juſt views of ſociety into a certain number of the liberally educated and reflecting members; give to the people guides and inſtructors; and the buſineſs is done. This however is not to be accompliſhed but in a gradual manner, as will more fully appear in the ſequel. The error lies, not in tolerating the worſt forms of government for a time, but in ſuppoſing a change impracticable, and not inceſſantly looking forward to its accompliſhment.

CHAP. VII.

OF THE INFLUENCE OF LUXURY.

The objection ſtated.—Source of this objection.—Refuted from mutability—from mortality—from ſympathy.—The probability of perſeverance conſidered.

THE ſecond objection to the principles already eſtabliſhed is derived from the influence of luxury, and affirms, "that nations like individuals are ſubject to the phenomena of youth and old age, and that, when a people by effeminacy and depravation of manners have ſunk into decrepitude, it is not within the compaſs of human ability to reſtore them to vigour and innocence."

This idea has been partly founded upon the romantic notions of paſtoral life and the golden age. Innocence is not virtue. Virtue demands the active employment of an ardent mind in the promotion of the general good. No man can be eminently virtuous, who is not accuſtomed to an extenſive range of reflection. He muſt ſee all the benefits to ariſe from a diſintereſted proceeding, and muſt underſtand the proper method of producing thoſe benefits. Ignorance, the ſlothful habits and limited views of uncultivated life have not in them more of true virtue, though they may be more harmleſs, than luxury, vanity and extravagance. Individuals of exquiſite feeling, whoſe diſguſt has been excited by the hardened ſelfiſhneſs or the unbluſhing corruption which have prevailed in their own times, have recurred in imagination to the foreſts of Norway or the bleak and uncomfortable Highlands of Scotland in ſearch of a purer race of mankind. This imagination has been the offspring of diſappointment, not the dictate of reaſon and philoſophy.

It may be true, that ignorance is nearer than prejudice to the reception of wiſdom, and that the abſence of virtue is a condition more auſpicious than the preſence of its oppoſite. In this caſe it would have been juſter to compare a nation ſunk in luxury, to an individual with confirmed habits of wrong, than to an individual whom a debilitated conſtitution was bringing faſt to the grave. But neither would that compariſon have been fair and equitable.

The condition of nations is more fluctuating, and will be found leſs obſtinate in its reſiſtance to a conſiſtent endeavour for their improvement, than that of individuals. In nations ſome of their members will be leſs confirmed in error than others. A certain number will be only in a very ſmall degree indiſpoſed to liſten to the voice of truth. This number, from the very nature of juſt ſentiments, muſt in the ordinary courſe of things perpetually increaſe. Every new convert will

be the means of converting others. In proportion as the body of diſciples is augmented, the modes of attack upon the prejudices of others will be varied, and ſuited to the variety of men's tempers and preposſeſſions.

Add to this that generations of men are perpetually going off the ſtage, while other generations ſucceed. The next generation will not have ſo many prejudices to ſubdue. Suppoſe a deſpotic nation by ſome revolution in its affairs to become poſſeſſed of the advantages of freedom. The children of the preſent race will be bred in more firm and independent habits of thinking; the ſuppleneſs, the timidity and the vicious dexterity of their fathers will give place to an erect mien, and a clear and deciſive judgment. The partial and imperfect change of character which was introduced at firſt, will in the ſucceeding age become more unalloyed and complete.

Laſtly, the power of reaſonable and juſt ideas in changing the character of nations, is in one reſpect infinitely greater than any power which can be brought to bear upon a ſolitary individual. The caſe is not of that cuſtomary ſort where the force of theory alone is tried in curing any perſon of his errors; but is as if he ſhould be placed in an entirely new ſituation. His habits are broken through, and his motives of action changed. Inſtead of being perpetually recalled to vicious practices by the recurrence of his former connections, the whole ſociety receives an impulſe from the ſame cauſe that acts upon the individual. New ideas are ſuggeſted, and the langour and imbecility which might be incident to each, are counteracted by the ſpectacle of general enthuſiaſm and concert.

But it has been farther alleged, "that even ſhould a luxurious nation be induced by intolerable grievances and notorious uſurpation to embrace juſt principles of human ſociety, they would be unable to perpetuate them, and would ſoon be led back by their evil habits to their former vices and corruption:" that is, they

would be capable of the heroic energy that should expel the usurper, but not of the moderate resolution that should prevent his return. They would rouse themselves so far from their lethargy as to assume a new character and enter into different views; but, after having for some time acted upon their convictions, they would suddenly become incapable of understanding the truth of their principles and feeling their influence.

Men always act upon their apprehensions of preferableness. There are few errors of which they are guilty, which may not be resolved into a narrow and inadequate view of the alternative presented for their choice. Present pleasure may appear more certain and eligible than distant good. But they never choose evil as apprehended to be evil. Wherever a clear and unanswerable notion of any subject is presented to their view, a correspondent action or course of actions inevitably follows. Having thus gained one step in the acquisition of truth, it cannot easily be conceived as lost. A body of men, having detected the injurious consequences of an evil under which they have long laboured, and having shaken it off, will scarcely voluntarily restore the mischief they have annihilated. No recollection of past error can reasonably be supposed to have strength enough, to lead back into absurdity and uncompensated subjection men who have once been thoroughly awakened to the perception of truth.

CHAP. VIII.

HUMAN INVENTIONS SUSCEPTIBLE OF PERPETUAL IMPROVEMENT.

Perfectibility of man—inſtanced, firſt, in language.—Its beginnings.—Abſtraction.—Complexity of language.—Second inſtance: alphabetical writing.—Hieroglyphics at firſt univerſal.—Progreſſive deviations.—Application.

BEFORE we proceed to the direct ſubject of the preſent enquiry, it may not be improper to reſume the ſubject of human improveableneſs, and conſider it in a ſomewhat greater detail. An opinion has been extenſively entertained, "that the differences of the human ſpecies in different ages and countries, particularly ſo far as relates to moral principles of conduct, are extremely inſignificant and trifling; that we are deceived in this reſpect by diſtance and confounded by glare; but that in reality the virtues and vices of men collectively taken, always have remained, and of conſequence," it is ſaid, "always will remain, nearly at the ſame point."

The erroneouſneſs of this opinion will perhaps be more completely expoſed by a ſummary recollection of the actual hiſtory of our ſpecies, than by the cloſeſt deductions of abſtract reaſon. We will in this place ſimply remind the reader of the great changes which man has undergone as an intellectual being, entitling us to infer the probability of improvements not leſs eſſential to be realiſed in future. The concluſion to be deduced from this delineation, that his moral improvements will in ſome degree keep pace with his intellectual, and his actions correſpond with his opinions, muſt depend for its force upon the train of rea-

ſoning which has already been brought forward under that head *.

Let us carry back our minds to man in his original ſtate, a being capable of impreſſions and knowledge to an unbounded extent, but not having as yet received the one or cultivated the other; let us contraſt this being with all that ſcience and genius have effected: and from hence we may form ſome idea what it is of which human nature is capable. It is to be remembered, that this being did not, as now, derive aſſiſtance from the communications of his fellows, nor had his feeble and crude conceptions aſſiſted by the experience of ſucceſſive centuries; but that in the ſtate we are figuring all men were equally ignorant. The field of improvement was before them, but for every ſtep in advance they were to be indebted to their untutored efforts. Nor is it of conſequence whether ſuch was actually the progreſs of mind, or whether, as others teach, the progreſs was abridged and man was immediately advanced half way to the end of his career by the interpoſition of the author of his nature. In any caſe it is an allowable, and will be found no unimproving ſpeculation, to conſider mind as it is in itſelf, and to enquire what would have been its hiſtory, if immediately upon its production, it had been left to be acted upon by thoſe ordinary laws of the univerſe with whoſe operations we are acquainted.

One of the acquiſitions moſt evidently requiſite as a preliminary to our preſent improvements is that of language. But it is impoſſible to conceive of an acquiſition, that muſt have been in its origin more different from what at preſent it is found, or that leſs promiſed that copiouſneſs and refinement it has ſince exhibited.

Its beginning was probably from thoſe involuntary cries, which infants for example are found to utter in

* *Chap. V.*

the earlieſt ſtages of their exiſtence, and which previouſly to the idea of exciting pity or procuring aſſiſtance, ſpontaneouſly ariſe from the operation of pain upon our animal frame. Theſe cries, when actually uttered, become a ſubject of perception to him by whom they are uttered; and being obſerved to be conſtantly aſſociated with certain preliminary impreſſions and to excite the idea of thoſe impreſſions in the hearer, may afterwards be repeated from reflexion and the deſire of relief. Eager deſire to communicate any information to another, will alſo prompt us to utter ſome ſimple ſound for the purpoſe of exciting attention: This ſound will probably frequently recur to organs unpractiſed to variety, and will at length ſtand as it were by convention for the information intended to be conveyed. But the diſtance is extreme from theſe ſimple modes of communication, which we poſſeſs in common with ſome of the inferior animals, to all the analyſis and abſtraction which languages require.

Abſtraction indeed, though, as it is commonly underſtood, it be one of the ſublimeſt operations of mind, is in ſome ſort coeval with and inſeperable from the exiſtence of mind *. The next ſtep to ſimple per-

* *The queſtion, whether or not the human mind is capable of forming abſtract ideas, has been the ſubject of much idle and unprofitable diſquiſition. The debate has chiefly ariſen from a habit of uſing the term idea, not, as Mr. Locke does, for every conception that can exiſt in the mind, but as conſtantly deſcriptive of an image, or picture. It is certain that we have a general ſtandard of ſome ſort in our minds, in conſequence of which, if an animal is preſented to our view, we can in moſt caſes decide that it is, or is not, a horſe, a man, &c; nor will it be maintained that we ſhould be unable to form ſuch judgments, even if we were denied the uſe of ſpeech. It is certain that we could never in any caſe reaſon, were it not for this power of generaliſation, enabling us from like*

ception is that of compariſon, or the coupling together of two ideas and the perception of their reſemblances and differences. Without compariſon there can be no preference, and without preference no voluntary action: though it muſt be acknowledged, that this compariſon is an operation which may be performed by the mind without adverting to its nature, and that neither the brute nor the ſavage has a conſciouſneſs of the ſeveral ſteps of the intellectual progreſs. Compariſon immediately leads to imperfect abſtraction. The ſenſation of to-day is claſſed, if ſimilar, with the ſenſation of yeſterday, and an inference is made reſpecting the conduct to be adopted. Without this degree of abſtraction, the faint dawnings of language already deſcribed, could never have exiſted. Abſtraction, which was neceſſary to the firſt exiſtence of language, is again aſſiſted in its operations by language. That generaliſation, which is implied in the very notion of a thinking being, being thus embodied and rendered palpable, makes the mind acquainted with its own powers and creates a reſtleſs deſire after farther progreſs.

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antecedents to infer like conſequents; and it will ſcarcely be denied at the preſent day that brutes are endowed with a faculty of reaſon.

It is a curious fact, and on that account worthy to be mentioned in this place, that the human mind is perhaps incapable of entertaining any but general ideas. Take, for example, a wine glaſs. If, after this glaſs is withdrawn, I preſent to you another from the ſame ſet you will probably be unable to determine whether it is another or the ſame. It is with a like inattention that people in general view a flock of ſheep. The ſhepherd only diſtinguiſhes the features of every one of his ſheep from the features of every other. But it is impoſſible ſo to individualiſe in our remarks, as to cauſe our idea to be truly particular, and not ſpecial. Thus there are memorable inſtances of one man ſo nearly reſembling another, as to be able to paſs himſelf upon the wife and all the relatives of this man, as if he were the ſame.

But, though it be by no means impoſſible, to trace the cauſes that concurred to the production of language, and to prove them adequate to their effect, it does not the leſs appear that this is an acquiſition of ſlow growth and ineſtimable value. The very ſteps, were we to purſue them, would appear like an endleſs labyrinth. The diſtance is immeaſurable, between the three or four vague and inarticulate ſounds uttered by animals, and the copiouſneſs of lexicography or the regularity of grammar. The general and ſpecial names by which things are at firſt complicated and afterwards divided, the names by which properties are ſeparated from their ſubſtances, and powers from both the comprehenſive diſtribution of parts of ſpeech, verbs, adjectives and particles, the inflexions of words by which the change of their terminations changes their meaning through a variety of ſhadings, their concords and their governments, all of them preſent us with ſuch a boundleſs catalogue of ſcience, that he, who on the one hand did not know that the taſk had been actually performed, or who on the other was not intimately acquainted with the progreſſive nature of mind, would pronounce the accompliſhment of them impoſſible.

A ſecond invention, well calculated to impreſs us with a ſenſe of the progreſſive nature of man, is that of alphabetical writing. Hieroglyphical or picture-writing appears at ſome time to have been univerſal, and the difficulty of conceiving the gradation from this to alphabetical is ſo great, as to have induced Hartley, one of the moſt acute of philoſophical writers, to have recourſe to miraculous interpoſition as the only adequate ſolution. In reality no problem can be imagined more operoſe, than that of decompoſing the ſounds of words into four-and-twenty ſimple elements or letters, and again finding theſe elements in all other words. When we have examined the ſubject a little more cloſely, and perceived the ſteps by which this labour was accompliſhed, perhaps the immenſity of the labour will rather gain upon us, as he that ſhall have

counted a million of units, will have a vaſter idea upon the ſubject, than he that only conſiders them in the groſs.

In China hieroglyphical writing has never been ſuperſeded by alphabetical and this from the very nature of their language, which is conſiderably monoſyllabic, the ſame ſound being made to ſignify a great variety of objects, by means of certain ſhadings of tone too delicate for any alphabet to repreſent. They have however two kinds of writing, one for the learned, and another for the vulgar. The learned adhere cloſely to their hieroglyphical writing, repreſenting every word by its correſponding picture; but the vulgar are frequent in their deviations from it.

Hieroglyphical writing and ſpeech may indeed be conſidered in the firſt inſtance as two languages, running paralled to each other, but with no neceſſary connection. The picture and the word each of them repreſent the idea, one as immediately as the other. But, though independent, they will become accidentally aſſociated; the picture at firſt imperfectly, and afterwards more conſtantly ſuggeſting the idea of its correſpondent ſound. It is in this manner that the mercantile claſſes of China began to corrupt, as it is ſtyled, their hieroglyphical writing. They had a word ſuppoſe of two ſyllables to write. The character appropriate to that word they were not acquainted with, or it failed to ſuggeſt itſelf to their memory. Each of the ſyllables however was a diſtinct word in the language, and the characters belonging to them perfectly familiar. The expedient that ſuggeſted itſelf was to write theſe two characters with a mark ſignifying their union, though in reality the characters had hitherto been appropriated to ideas of a different ſort, wholly unconnected with that now intended to be conveyed. Thus a ſort of rebus or charade was produced. In other caſes the word, though monoſyllabic, was capable of being divided into two ſounds, and the ſame proceſs was employed. This is a firſt ſtep towards alphabetical analyſis. Some word, ſuch as the interjection *O!* or the particle *A* is already a ſound perfectly

ſimple, and thus furniſhes a firſt ſtone to the edifice. But, though theſe ideas may perhaps preſent us with a faint view of the manner in which an alphabet was produced, yet the actual production of a complete alphabet is perhaps of all human diſcoveries, that which required the moſt perſevering reflection, the luckieſt concurrence of circumſtances, and the moſt patient and gradual progreſs.

Let us however ſuppoſe man to have gained the two firſt elements of knowledge, ſpeaking and writing; let us trace him through all his ſubſequent improvements, through whatever conſtitutes the inequality between Newton and the ploughman, and indeed much more than this, ſince the moſt ignorant ploughman in civiliſed ſociety is infinitely different from what he would have been, when ſtripped of all the benefits he has derived from literature and the arts. Let us ſurvey the earth covered with the labours of man, houſes, incloſures, harveſts, manufactures, inſtruments, machines, together with all the wonders of painting, poetry, eloquence and philoſophy.

Such was man in his original ſtate, and ſuch is man as we at preſent behold him. Is it poſſible for us to contemplate what he has already done, without being impreſſed with a ſtrong preſentiment of the improvements he has yet to accompliſh? There is no ſcience that is not capable of additions; there is no art that may not be carried to a ſtill higher perfection. If this be true of all other ſciences, why not of morals? If this be true of all other arts, why not of ſocial inſtitution? The very conception of this as poſſible, is in the higheſt degree encouraging. If we can ſtill farther demonſtrate it to be a part of the natural and regular progreſs of mind, our confidence and our hopes will then be complete. This is the temper with which we ought to engage in the ſtudy of political truth. Let us look back, that we may profit by the experience of mankind; but let us not look back, as if the wiſdom of our anceſtors was ſuch as to leave no room for future improvement.

AN

ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

POLITICAL JUSTICE.

BOOK II.

PRINCIPLES OF SOCIETY.

CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

Nature of the enquiry.—Connection of politics and morals.—Miſtakes to which the enquiry has been expoſed.—Diſtinction between ſociety and government.

IN the preceding book we have cleared the foundations for the remaining branches of enquiry, and ſhown what are the proſpects it is reaſonable to entertain as to future political improvement. The effects which are produced by poſitive inſtitutions have there been delineated, as well as the extent of the powers of man conſidered in his ſocial capacity. It is time that we proceed to thoſe diſquiſitions which are more immediately the object of the preſent work.

Political enquiry may be distributed under two heads: first, what are the regulations which will conduce to the well being of man in society; and, secondly, what is the authority which is competent to prescribe regulations.

The regulations to which the conduct of men living in society ought to be conformed, may be considered in two ways: first, those moral laws which are enjoined upon us by the dictates of enlightened reason; and, secondly, those principles a deviation from which the interest of the community may be supposed to render it proper to repress by sanctions and punishment.

Morality is that system of conduct which is determined by a consideration of the greatest general good: he is entitled to the highest moral approbation, whose conduct is, in the greatest number of instances, or in the most momentous instances, governed by views of benevolence, and made subservient to public utility. In like manner the only regulations which any political authority can be justly entitled to enforce, are such as are best adapted to public utility. Consequently just political regulations are nothing more than a certain select part of moral law. The supreme power in a state ought not, in the strictest sense, to require any thing of its members, that an understanding sufficiently enlightened would not prescribe without such interference *.

These considerations seem to lead to the detection of a mistake which has been very generally committed by political writers of our own country. They have for the most part confined their researches to the question of What is a just political authority or the most eligible form of government, consigning to others the delineation of right principles of conduct and equitable regulations. But there appears to be something preposterous in this mode of proceeding. A well consti-

* *Chap.* V *of the following Book.*

tuted government is only the means for enforcing suitable regulations. One form of government is preferable to another in exact proportion to the security it affords, that nothing shall be done in the name of the community, which is not conducive to the welfare of the whole. The question therefore, What it is which is thus conducive, is upon every account entitled to the first place in our disquisitions.

One of the ill consequences which have resulted from this distorted view of the science of politics, is a notion very generally entertained, that a community or society of men has a right to lay down whatever rules it may think proper for its own observance. This will presently be proved to be an erroneous position*. It may be prudent in an individual to submit in some cases to the usurpation of a majority; it may be unavoidable in a community to proceed upon the imperfect and erroneous views they shall chance to entertain: but this is a misfortune entailed upon us by the nature of government, and not a matter of right†.

A second ill consequence that has arisen from this proceeding, is that, politics having been thus violently separated from morality, government itself has no longer been compared with its true criterion. Instead of enquiring what species of government was most conducive to the public welfare, an unprofitable disquisition has been instituted respecting the probable origin of government; and its different forms have been estimated, not by the consequences with which they were pregnant, but the source from which they sprung. Hence men have been prompted to look back to the folly of their ancestors, rather than forward to the benefits derivable from the improvements of human knowledge. Hence, in investigating their rights, they have recurred less to the great principles of morality, than to the records and charters of a bar-

* *Chap.* V *of this Book.*
† *Chap.* V.

barous age. As if men were not entitled to all the benefits of the social state, till they could prove their inheriting them from some bequest of their distant progenitors. As if men were not as justifiable and meritorious, in planting liberty in a soil in which it had never existed, as in restoring it where it could be proved only to have suffered a temporary suspension.

The reasons here assigned strongly tend to evince the necessity of establishing the genuine principles of society, before we enter upon the direct consideration of government. It may be proper in this place to state the fundamental distinction which exists between these topics of enquiry. Men associated at first for the sake of mutual assistance. They did not foresee that any restraint would be necessary, to regulate the conduct of individual members of the society, towards each other, or towards the whole. The necessity of restraint grew out of the errors and perverseness of a few. An acute writer has expressed this idea with peculiar felicity. "Society and government," says he, "are different in themselves, and have different origins. Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness. Society is in every state a blessing; government even in its best state but a necessary evil *."

* *Common Sense, p.* 1.

CHAP II.

OF JUSTICE.

Extent and meaning of juſtice.—Subject of juſtice: mankind.—Its diſtribution meaſured by the capacity of its ſubject—by his uſefulneſs.—Self love conſidered.—Family affection.—Gratitude.—Objections: from ignorance—from utility.—An exception ſtated.—Remark.—Degrees of juſtice.—Application.—Idea of political juſtice.

FROM what has been ſaid it appears, that the ſubject of our preſent enquiry is ſtrictly ſpeaking a department of the ſcience of morals. Morality is the ſource from which its fundamental axioms muſt be drawn, and they will be made ſomewhat clearer in the preſent inſtance, if we aſſume the term juſtice as a general appellation for all moral duty.

That this appellation is ſufficiently expreſſive of the ſubject will appear, if we examine mercy, gratitude, temperance, or any of thoſe duties which in looſer ſpeaking are contradiſtinguiſhed from juſtice. Why ſhould I pardon this criminal, remunerate this favour, or abſtain from this indulgence? If it partake of the nature of morality, it muſt be either right or wrong, juſt or unjuſt. It muſt tend to the benefit of the individual, either without trenching upon, or with actual advantage to the maſs of individuals. Either way it benefits the whole, becauſe individuals are parts of the whole. Therefore to do it is juſt, and to forbear it is unjuſt.—By juſtice I underſtand that impartial treatment of every man in matters that relate to his happineſs, which is meaſured ſolely by a conſideration of the properties of the receiver, and the capacity of him that beſtows. Its principle therefore is, according to a well known phraſe, to be "no reſpecter of perſons."

Conſiderable light will probably be thrown upon our inveſtigation, if, quitting for the preſent the political view, we examine juſtice merely as it exiſts among individuals. Juſtice is a rule of conduct originating in the connection of one percipient being with another. A comprehenſive maxim which has been laid down upon the ſubject is, "that we ſhould love our neighbour as ourſelves." But this maxim, though poſſeſſing conſiderable merit as a popular principle, is not modelled with the ſtrictneſs of philoſophical accuracy.

In a looſe and general view I and my neighbour are both of us men; and of conſequence entitled to equal attention. But in reality it is probable that one of us is a being of more worth and importance than the other. A man is of more worth than a beaſt; becauſe, being poſſeſſed of higher faculties, he is capable of a more refined and genuine happineſs. In the ſame manner the illuſtrious archbiſhop of Cambray was of more worth than his valet, and there are few of us that would heſitate to pronounce if his palace were in flames, and the life of only one of them could be preſerved, which of the two ought to be preferred.

But there is another ground of preference, beſide the private conſideration of one of them being farther removed from the ſtate of a mere animal. We are not connected with one or two percipient beings, but with a ſociety, a nation, and in ſome ſenſe with the whole family of mankind. Of conſequence that life ought to be preferred which will be moſt conducive to the general good. In ſaving the life of Fenelon, ſuppoſe at the moment he conceived the project of his immortal Telemachus, I ſhould have been promoting the benefit of thouſands, who have been cured by the peruſal of that work of ſome error, vice and conſequent unhappineſs. Nay, my benefit would extend farther than this, for every individual thus cured, has become a better member of ſociety, and has con-

tributed in his turn to the happineſs, information and improvement of others.

Suppoſe I had been myſelf the valet; I ought to have choſen to die, rather than Fenelon ſhould have died. The life of Fenelon was really preferable to that of the valet. But underſtanding is the faculty that perceives the truth of this and ſimilar propoſitions; and juſtice is the principle that regulates my conduct accordingly. It would have been juſt in the valet to have preferred the archbiſhop to himſelf. To have done otherwiſe would have been a breach of juſtice *.

Suppoſe the valet had been my brother, my father or my benefactor. This would not alter the truth of the propoſition. The life of Fenelon would ſtill be more valuable than that of the valet; and juſtice, pure, unadulterated juſtice, would ſtill have preferred that which was moſt valuable. Juſtice would have taught me to ſave the life of Fenelon at the expence of the other. What magic is there in the pronoun "my," to overturn the deciſions of impartial truth? My brother or my father may be a fool or a profligate, malicious, lying or diſhoneſt. If they be, of what conſequence is it that they are mine?

"But to my father I am indebted for exiſtence; he ſupported me in the helpleſſneſs of infancy." When he firſt ſubjected himſelf to the neceſſity of theſe cares, he was probably influenced by no particular motives of benevolence to his future offspring. Every voluntary benefit however entitles the beſtower to ſome kindneſs and retribution. Why ſo? Becauſe a voluntary benefit is an evidence of benevolent intention, that is, in a certain degree, of virtue. It is the diſpoſition of the mind, not the external action ſeparately taken, that entitles to reſpect. But the merit of this diſpoſition is equal, whether the benefit were conferred upon me or upon

* *The queſtion, how far impartial juſtice is a motive capable of operating upon the mind, will be found examined at length, Book* IV, *Chap.* VIII.

another. I and another man cannot both be right in preferring our individual benefactor, for no man can be at the same time both better and worse than his neighbour. My benefactor ought to be esteemed, not because he bestowed a benefit upon me, but because he bestowed it upon a human being. His desert will be in exact proportion to the degree, in which that human being was worthy of the distinction conferred.

Thus every view of the subject brings us back to the consideration of my neighbour's moral worth and his importance to the general weal, as the only standard to determine the treatment to which he is entitled. Gratitude therefore, if by gratitude we understand a sentiment of preference which I entertain towards another, upon the ground of my having been the subject of his benefits, is no part either of justice or virtue*.

It may be objected, "that my relation, my companion, or my benefactor will of course in many instances obtain an uncommon portion of my regard: for, not being universally capable of discriminating the comparative worth of different men, I shall inevitably judge most favourably of him, of whose virtues I have received the most unquestionable proofs; and thus shall be compelled to prefer the man of moral worth whom I know, to another who may possess unknown to me, an essential superiority."

This compulsion however is founded only in the imperfection of human nature. It may serve as an apology for my error, but can never turn error into truth. It will always remain contrary to the strict and universal decisions of justice. The difficulty of conceiving this, is owing merely to our confounding the disposition from which an action is chosen, with the action itself. The disposition, that would prefer virtue to vice and a greater degree of virtue to a less, is undoubtedly a subject of approbation; the erroneous exercise of this

* *This argument respecting gratitude is stated with great clearness in an Essay on the Nature of True Virtue, by Jonathan Edwards.*

disposition by which a wrong object is selected, if unavoidable, is to be deplored, but can by no colouring and under no denomination be converted into right *.

It may in the second place be objected, "that a mutual commerce of benefits tends to increase the mass of benevolent action, and that to increase the mass of benevolent action is to contribute to the general good." Indeed! Is the general good promoted by falsehood, by treating a man of one degree of worth, as if he had ten times that worth? or as if he were in any degree different from what he really is? Would not the most beneficial consequences result from a different plan; from my constantly and carefully enquiring into the deserts of all those with whom I am connected, and from their being sure, after a certain allowance for the fallibility of human judgment, of being treated by me exactly as they deserved? Who can describe the benefits that would result from such a plan of conduct, if universally adopted?

It would perhaps tend to make the truth in this respect more accurately understood, to consider that, whereas the received morality teaches me to be grateful, whether in affection or in act, for benefits conferred on myself, the reasonings here delivered, without removing the tie upon me from personal benefits (except where benefit is conferred from an unworthy motive), multiply the obligation, and enjoin me to be also grateful for benefits conferred upon others. My obligation towards my benefactor, supposing his benefit to be justly conferred, is in no sort dissolved; nor can any thing authorise me to supersede it but the requisition of a superior duty. That which ties me to my benefactor, upon these principles, is the moral worth he has displayed; and it will frequently happen that I shall be obliged to yield him the perference, because, while other competitors may be of greater worth,

* *Chap.* IV.

the evidence I have of the worth of my benefactor is more complete.

There seems to be more truth, in the argument, derived chiefly from the prevailing modes of social existence, in favour of my providing in ordinary cases for my wife and children, my brothers and relations, before I provide for strangers, than in those which have just been examined. As long as the providing for individuals is conducted with its present irregularity and caprice, it seems as if there must be a certain distribution of the class needing superintendence and supply among the class affording it; that each man may have his claim and resource. But this argument is to be admitted with great caution. It belongs only to ordinary cases; and cases of a higher order or a more urgent necessity will perpetually occur, in competition with which these will be altogether impotent. We must be severely scrupulous in measuring the quantity of supply; and, with respect to money in particular, should remember how little is yet understood of the true mode of employing it for the public benefit.

Nothing can be less exposed to reasonable exception than these principles. If there be such a thing as virtue, it must be placed in a conformity to truth, and not to error. It cannot be virtuous, that I should esteem any man, that is, consider him as possessed of estimable qualities, when in reality he is destitute of them. It surely cannot conduce to the benefit of mankind, that each man should have a different standard of moral judgment and preference, and that the standard of all should vary from that of reality. Those who teach this, impose the bitterest disgrace upon virtue. They assert in other words, that, when men cease to be deceived, when the film is removed from their eyes, and they see things as they are, they will cease to be either good or happy. Upon the system opposite to theirs, the soundest criterion of virtue is, to put ourselves in the place of an impartial spectator, of an angelic nature, supposed, beholding us from an

elevated ſtation, and uninfluenced by our prejudices, conceiving what would be his eſtimate of the intrinſic circumſtances of our neighbour, and acting accordingly.

Having conſidered the perſons with whom juſtice is converſant, let us next enquire into the degree in which we are obliged to conſult the good of others. And here upon the very ſame reaſons it will follow, that it is juſt I ſhould do all the good in my power. Does a perſon in diſtreſs apply to me for relief? It is my duty to grant it, and I commit a breach of duty in refuſing. If this principle be not of univerſal application, it is becauſe, in conferring a benefit upon an individual, I may in ſome inſtances inflict an injury of ſuperior magnitude upon myſelf or ſociety. Now the ſame juſtice, that binds me to any individual of my fellow men, binds me to the whole. If, while I confer a benefit upon one man, it appear, in ſtriking an equitable balance, that I am injuring the whole, my action ceaſes to be right and becomes abſolutely wrong. But how much am I bound to do for the general weal, that is, for the benefit of the individuals of whom the whole is compoſed? Every thing in my power. To the neglect of the means of my own exiſtence? No; for I am myſelf a part of the whole. Beſide, it will rarely happen that the project of doing for others every thing in my power, will not demand for its execution the preſervation of my own exiſtence; or in other words, it will rarely happen that I cannot do more good in twenty years than in one. If the extraordinary caſe ſhould occur, in which I can promote the general good by my death more than by my life, juſtice requires that I ſhould be content to die. In all other caſes, it is juſt that I ſhould be careful to maintain my body and mind in the utmoſt vigour, and in the beſt condition for ſervice*.

Suppoſe, for example, that it is right for one man to poſſeſs a greater portion of property than another,

* *Appendix, No.* I, *p.* 121.

whether as the fruit of his induſtry, or the inheritance of his anceſtors. Juſtice obliges him to regard this property as a truſt, and calls upon him maturely to conſider in what manner it may be employed for the increaſe of liberty, knowledge and virtue. He has no right to diſpoſe of a ſhilling of it at the ſuggeſtion of his caprice. So far from being entitled to well earned applauſe for having employed ſome ſcanty pittance in the ſervice of philanthropy, he is in the eye of juſtice a delinquent if he withhold any portion from that ſervice. Could that portion have been better or more worthily employed? That it could, is implied in the very terms of the propoſition. Then it was juſt it ſhould have been ſo employed.—In the ſame manner as my property, I hold my perſon as a truſt in behalf of mankind. I am bound to employ my talents, my underſtanding, my ſtrength and my time for the production of the greateſt quantity of general good. Such are the declarations of juſtice, ſo great is the extent of my duty.

But juſtice is reciprocal. If it be juſt that I ſhould confer a benefit, it is juſt that another man ſhould receive it, and, if I withhold from him that to which he is entitled, he may juſtly complain. My neighbour is in want of ten pounds that I can ſpare. There is no law of political inſtitution to reach this caſe, and transfer the property from me to him. But in the eye of ſimple juſtice, unleſs it can be ſhown that the money can be more beneficently employed, his claim is as complete, as if he had my bond in his poſſeſſion, or had ſupplied me with goods to the amount *.

To this it has ſometimes been anſwered, "that there is more than one perſon, who ſtands in need of the money I have to ſpare, and of conſequence I muſt be at liberty to beſtow it as I pleaſe." By no means. If only one perſon offer himſelf to my knowledge or

* *A ſpirited outline of theſe principles is ſketched in Swift's Sermon on Mutual Subjection.*

ſearch, to me there is but one. Thoſe others that I cannot find, belong to other rich men to aſſiſt (every man is in reality rich, who has more than his juſt occaſions demand), and not to me. If more than one perſon offer, I am obliged to balance their fitneſs, and conduct myſelf accordingly. It is ſcarcely poſſible that two men ſhould be of exactly equal fitneſs, or that I ſhould be equally certain of the fitneſs of the one as of the other.

It is therefore impoſſible for me to confer upon any man a favour; I can only do him a right. Whatever deviates from the law of juſtice, though it ſhould be in the too much done in favour of ſome individual or ſome part of the general whole, is ſo much ſubſtracted from the general ſtock, ſo much of abſolute injuſtice.

The reaſonings here alleged, are ſufficient clearly to eſtabliſh the competence of juſtice as a principle of deduction in all caſes of moral enquiry. They are themſelves rather of the nature of illuſtration and example, and, if error be imputable to them in particulars, this will not invalidate the general concluſion, the propriety of applying moral juſtice as a criterion in the inveſtigation of political truth.

Society is nothing more than an aggregation of individuals. Its claims and duties muſt be the aggregate of their claims and duties, the one no more precarious and arbitrary than the other. What has the ſociety a right to require from me? The queſtion is already anſwered: every thing that it is my duty to do. Any thing more? Certainly not. Can it change eternal truth, or ſubvert the nature of men and their actions? Can it make my duty conſiſt in committing intemperance, in maltreating or aſſaſſinating my neighbour?—Again. What is it that the ſociety is bound to do for its members? Every thing that is requiſite for their welfare. But the nature of their welfare is defined by the nature of mind. That will moſt contribute to it, which expands the underſtanding, ſupplies incitements

to virtue, fills us with a generous conſciouſneſs of our independence, and carefully removes whatever can impede our exertions.

Should it be affirmed, "that it is not in the power of any political ſyſtem to ſecure to us theſe advantages," the concluſion will not be leſs incontrovertible. It is bound to contribute every thing it is able to theſe purpoſes. Suppoſe its influence in the utmoſt degree limited; there muſt be one method approaching nearer than any other to the deſired object, and that method ought to be univerſally adopted. There is one thing that political inſtitutions can aſſuredly do, they can avoid poſitively counteracting the true intereſts of their ſubjects. But all capricious rules and arbitrary diſtinctions do poſitively counteract them. There is ſcarcely any modification of ſociety but has in it ſome degree of moral tendency. So far as it produces neither miſchief nor benefit, it is good for nothing. So far as it tends to the improvement of the community, it ought to be univerſally adopted.

Appendix, No. I. p. 121.

OF SUICIDE.

Motives of ſuicide: 1. *Eſcape from pain.*—2. *Benevolence.*—*Martyrdom conſidered.*

THIS reaſoning will throw ſome light upon the long diſputed caſe of ſuicide. "Have I a right to deſtroy myſelf in order to eſcape from pain or diſgrace?" Circumſtances that ſhould juſtify ſuch an action, can ſcarcely occur. It is difficult to imagine a ſituation, that ſhall exclude the poſſibility of future life, vigour and uſefulneſs. It will frequently happen that the man, who once ſaw nothing before him but deſpair, ſhall afterwards enjoy a long period of happi-

neſs and honour. To eſcape from pain is a motive excluſively ſelfiſh, and he who poſtpones the poſſible benefit of many to his perſonal eaſe, ſeems to be the fit object of cenſure, and not of approbation.

"Is there then no caſe in which ſuicide is a virtue?" What ſhall we think of the reaſoning of Lycurgus, who, when he determined upon a voluntary death remarked, "that all the faculties a rational being poſſeſſed were capable of a moral uſe, and that, after having ſpent his life in the ſervice of his country, a man ought, if poſſible to render his death a ſource of additional benefit?" This was the motive of the ſuicide of Codrus, Leonidas and Decius. If the ſame motive prevailed in the much admired ſuicide of Cato, and he were inſtigated by reaſons purely benevolent, it is impoſſible not to applaud his intention, even if he were miſtaken in the application. The difficulty is to decide whether in any inſtance, the recourſe to a voluntary death, can overbalance the uſefulneſs to be exerted in twenty years of additional life.

Additional importance will be reflected upon this diſquiſition, if we remember that martyrs [μαρτυρες] are ſuicides by the very ſignification of the term. They die for a teſtimony [μαρτυριον]. But that would be impoſſible, if their death were not to a certain degree a voluntary action. We muſt aſſume that it was poſſible for them to avoid this fate, before we can draw any concluſion from it in favour of the cauſe they eſpouſed. They were determined to die, rather than reflect diſhonour on that cauſe.

Appendix, No. II.

OF DUELLING.

Motives of duelling: 1. *revenge.*—2. *reputation.*—*Fallacy of this motive.*—*Objection anſwered.*—*Illuſtration.*

IT may be proper in this place to beſtow a moment's conſideration upon the trite, but very important caſe of duelling. A ſhort reflection will ſuffice to ſet it in its true light.

This deſpicable practice was originally invented by barbarians for the gratification of revenge. It was probably at that time thought a very happy project for reconciling the odiouſneſs of malignity with the gallantry of courage.

But in this light it is now generally given up. Men of the beſt underſtanding who lend it their ſanction, are unwillingly induced to do ſo, and engage in ſingle combat merely that their reputation may ſuſtain no ſlander.

Which of theſe two actions is the trueſt teſt of courage: the engaging in a practice which our judgment diſapproves, becauſe we cannot ſubmit to the conſequences of following that judgment; or the doing what we believe to be right, and chearfully encountering all the conſequences that may be annexed to the practice of virtue? With what patience can a man of virtue think of cutting off the life of a fellow mortal, or of putting an abrupt cloſe to all the generous projects he may himſelf conceive for the benefit of others, merely becauſe he has not the firmneſs to awe impertinence and falſhood into ſilence?

"But the refuſing a duel is an ambiguous action. Cowards may pretend principle to ſhelter themſelves from a danger they dare not meet."

This is partly true and partly falſe. There are few

actions indeed that are not ambiguous, or that with the same general outline may not proceed from different motives. But the manner of doing them will sufficiently show the principle from which they spring.

He, that would break through a received custom because he believes it to be wrong, must no doubt arm himself with fortitude. The point in which we principally fail, is in not accurately understanding our own intentions, and taking care beforehand to purify ourselves from every alloy of weakness and error. He, who comes forward with no other idea but that of rectitude, and who expresses, with the simplicity and firmness which conviction never fails to inspire, the views with which he is penetrated, is in no danger of being mistaken for a coward. If he hesitate, it is because he has not an idea perfectly clear of the sentiment he intends to convey. If he be in any degree embarrassed, it is because he has not a feeling, sufficiently generous and intrepid, of the guilt of the action in which he is urged to engage.

If courage have any intelligible nature, one of its principal fruits must be the daring to speak truth at all times, to all persons, and in every possible situation in which a well informed sense of duty may prescribe it. What is it but the want of courage that should prevent me from saying, "Sir, I will not accept your challenge. Have I injured you? I will readily and without compulsion repair my injustice to the uttermost mite. Have you misconstrued me? State to me the particulars, and doubt not that what is true I will make appear to be true. I should be a notorious criminal, were I to attempt your life, or assist you in an attempt upon mine. What compensation will the opinion of the world make for the recollection of so vile and brutal a proceeding? There is no true applause, but where the heart of him that receives it, beats in unison. There is no terrible censure, that the heart repels with conscious integrity. I am not the coward to do a deed that my soul detests, be-

cauſe I cannot endure the ſcoffs of the miſtaken. Loſs of reputation is a ſerious evil. But I will act ſo that no man hereafter ſhall ſuſpect me of irreſolution and puſillanimity." He that ſhould firmly hold this language, and act accordingly, would ſoon be acquitted of every diſhonourable imputation.

CHAP. III.

OF THE EQUALITY OF MANKIND.

Phyſical equality.—Objection.—Anſwers.—Moral equality.—How limited.—Province of political juſtice.

THE principles of juſtice, as explained in the preceding chapter, proceed upon the aſſumption of the equality of mankind. This equality is either phyſical or moral. Phyſical equality may be conſidered either as it relates to the ſtrength of the body or the faculties of the mind.

This part of the ſubject has been expoſed to cavil and objection. It has been ſaid, "that the reverſe of this equality is the reſult of our experience. Among the individuals of our ſpecies we actually find that there are not two alike. One man is ſtrong and another weak. One man is wiſe and another fooliſh. All that exiſts in the world of the inequality of conditions is to be traced to this as their ſource. The ſtrong man poſſeſſes power to ſubdue, and the weak ſtands in need of an ally to protect. The conſequence is inevitable: the equality of conditions is a chimerical aſſumption, neither poſſible to be reduced into practice, nor deſirable if it could be ſo reduced."

Upon this ſtatement two obſervations are to be made. Firſt, this inequality was in its origin infinitely leſs than it is at preſent. In the uncultivated ſtate of man diſeaſes, effeminacy and luxury were little known, and of conſequence the ſtrength of every

one much more nearly approached to the ſtrength of his neighbour. In the uncultivated ſtate of man the underſtandings of all were limited, their wants, their ideas and their views nearly upon a level. It was to be expected that in their firſt departure from this ſtate great irregularities would introduce themſelves; and it is the object of ſubſequent wiſdom and improvement to mitigate theſe irregularities.

Secondly, notwithſtanding the encroachments that have been made upon the equality of mankind, a great and ſubſtantial equality remains. There is no ſuch diſparity among the human race, as to enable one man to hold ſeveral other men in ſubjection, except ſo far as they are willing to be ſubject. All government is founded in opinion. Men at preſent live under any particular form, becauſe they conceive it their intereſt to do ſo. One part indeed of a community or empire may be held in ſubjection by force; but this cannot be the perſonal force of their deſpot; it muſt be the force of another part of the community, who are of opinion that it is their intereſt to ſupport his authority. Deſtroy this opinion, and the fabric which is built upon it falls to the ground. It follows therefore that all men are eſſentially independent.—So much for the phyſical equality.

The moral equality is ſtill leſs open to reaſonable exception. By moral equality I underſtand the propriety of applying one unalterable rule of juſtice to every caſe that may ariſe. This cannot be queſtioned but upon arguments that would ſubvert the very nature of virtue. "Equality," it has been affirmed, "will always be an unintelligible fiction, ſo long as the capacities of men ſhall be unequal, and their pretended claims have neither guarantee nor ſanction by which they can be inforced *." But ſurely juſtice is

* "*On a dit—que nous avions tous les mêmes droits. J'ignore ce que c'ſt que les mêmes droits, où il y a inégalité de talens ou de force, & nulle garantie, nul'eſanction.*" *Raynal, Revolution d'Amérique*, p. 34.

sufficiently intelligible in its own nature, abstractedly from the consideration whether it be or be not reduced into practice. Justice has relation to beings endowed with perception, and capable of pleasure and pain. Now it immediately results from the nature of such beings, independently of any arbitrary constitution, that pleasure is agreeable and pain odious, pleasure to be desired and pain to be obviated. It is therefore just and reasonable that such beings should contribute, so far as it lies in their power, to the pleasure and benefit of each other. Among pleasures some are more exquisite, more unalloyed and less precarious than others. It is just that these should be preferred.

From these simple principles we may deduce the moral equality of mankind. We are partakers of a common nature, and the same causes that contribute to the benefit of one, contribute to the benefit of another. Our senses and faculties are of the same denomination. Our pleasures and pains will therefore, be the same. We are all of us endowed with reason, able to compare to judge and to infer. The improvement therefore which is to be desired for one, is to be desired for another. We shall be provident for ourselves and useful to each other, in proportion as we rise above the atmosphere of prejudice. The same independence, the same freedom from any such restraint, as should prevent us from giving the reins to our own understanding, or from uttering upon all occasions whatever we think to be true, will conduce to the improvement of all. There are certain opportunities and a certain situation most advantageous to every human being, and it is just that these should be communicated to all, as nearly as the general economy will permit.

There is indeed one species of moral inequality parallel to the physical inequality that has been already described. The treatment to which men are entitled is to be measured by their merits and their virtues. That country would not be the seat of wisdom and reason, where the benefactor of his species was re-

garded with no greater degree of complacence than their enemy. But in reality this distinction, so far from being adverse to equality in any tenable sense, is friendly to it, and is accordingly known by the appellation of equity, a term derived from the same origin. Though in some sense an exception, it tends to the same purpose to which the principle itself is indebted for its value. It is calculated to infuse into every bosom an emulation of excellence. The thing really to be desired is the removing as much as possible arbitrary distinctions, and leaving to talents and virtue the field of exertion unimpaired. We should endeavour to afford to all the same opportunities and the same enncouragement, and to render justice the common interest and choice.

It should be observed, that the object of this chapter is barely to present a general outline of the principle of equality. The practical inferences that flow from it, must remain to be detailed under subsequent heads of enquiry.

CHAP. IV.

ON PERSONAL VIRTUE AND DUTY.

Of virtuous action.—Of a virtuous agent.—Capacity—in inanimate substances—in man.—Inference.—Of benevolent error.—Nature of vice.—Illustrations.—Mutability of the principle of belief.—Complexity in the operation of motives.—Deduction.—Of duty.—It is never our duty to do wrong.

THERE are two subjects of the utmost importance to a just delineation of the principles of society, which are on that account entitled to a separate examination; the duties incumbent on men living in society, and the rights accruing to them. It will probably be found, that the whole of what may after-

wards be advanced upon the different branches of political enquiry, will be intelligible or inconsistent, as these topics are accurately or erroneously explained.

First, of personal virtue and duty.

Virtue, like every other term of general science, may be understood either absolutely, or as the qualification and attribute of a particular being: in other words, it is one thing to enquire whether an action is virtuous, and another to enquire whether a man is virtuous. The former of these questions is considerably simple; the latter is more complex, and will require an examination of several circumstances before it can be satisfactorily determined.

In the first sense I would define virtue to be any action or actions of an intelligent being, proceeding from kind and benevolent intention, and having a tendency to contribute to general happiness. Thus defined, it distributes itself under two heads; and, in whatever instance either the tendency or the intention is wanting, the virtue is incomplete. An action, however pure may be the intention of the actor, the tendency of which is mischievous, or which shall merely be nugatory and useless in its character, is not a virtuous action. Were it otherwise, we should be obliged to concede the appellation of virtue to the most nefarious deeds of bigots, persecutors and religious assassins, and to the weakest observances of a deluded superstition. Still less does an action, the consequences of which shall be supposed to be in the highest degree beneficial, but which proceeds from a mean, corrupt and degrading motive, deserve the appellation of virtue. A virtuous action is that, of which both the motive and the tendency concur to excite our approbation.

Let us proceed from the consideration of the action to that of the actor. Before we can decide upon the degree in which any man is entitled to be denominated virtuous, we must compare his performance with his means. It is not enough that his conduct is

attended with an overbalance of good intention and beneficial results. If it appear that he has scarcely produced the tenth part of that benefit, either in magnitude or extent, which he was capable of producing, it is only in a very limited sense that he can be considered as a virtuous man.

What is it therefore, we are led to enquire, that constitutes the capacity of any man? Capacity is an idea produced in the mind by a contemplation of the assemblage of properties in any substance, and the uses to which a substance so circumstanced may be applied. Thus a given portion of metal may be formed at the pleasure of the manufacturer into various implements, a knife, a razor, a sword, a dozen of coat-buttons, &c. This is one stage of capacity. A second is, when it has already received the form of a knife, and, being dismissed by the manufacturer, falls into the hands of the person who intends it for his private use. By this person it may be devoted to purposes, beneficial, pernicious or idle.—To apply these considerations to the nature of a human being.

We are not here enquiring respecting the capacity of man absolutely speaking, but of an individual; the performer of a given action, or the person who has engaged in a certain series of conduct. In the same manner therefore as the knife may be applied to various purposes at the pleasure of its possessor, so an individual endowed with certain qualifications, may engage in various pursuits, according to the views that are presented to him, and the motives that actuate his mind.

Human capacity however, is a subject attended with greater ambiguity than the capacity of inanimate substances. Capacity assumes something as fixed, and enquires into the temporary application of these permanent qualities. But it is easier to define with tolerable precision the permanent qualities of an individual knife, for example, than of an individual man. Every thing in man may be said to be in a state of flux;

he is a Proteus whom we know not how to detain. That of which I am capable, for inſtance, as to my conduct to-day, falls extremely ſhort of that of which I am capable as to my conduct in the two or three next enſuing years. For what I ſhall do to-day I am dependent upon my ignorance in ſome things, my want of practice in others, and the erroneous habits I may in any reſpect have contracted. But many of theſe diſadvantages may be ſuperſeded, when the queſtion is reſpecting what I ſhall produce in the two or three next years of my life. Nor is this all. Even my capacity of to-day is in a great degree determinable by the motives that ſhall excite me. When a man is placed in circumſtances of a very ſtrong and impreſſive nature, he is frequently found to poſſeſs or inſtantaneouſly to acquire, capacities which neither he nor his neighbours previouſly ſuſpected. We are obliged however in the deciſions of morality to ſubmit to theſe uncertainties. It is only after having formed the moſt accurate notions we are able reſpecting the capacity of a man, and compared this capacity with his performance, that we can decide with any degree of ſatisfaction whether he is entitled to the appellation of virtuous.

There is another difficulty which adheres to this queſtion. Is it the motive alone that we are entitled to take into conſideration when we decide upon the merits of the individual, or are we obliged, as in the caſe of virtue abſolutely taken, to conſider both the motives and the tendency of his conduct? The former of theſe has been frequently aſſerted. But it is attended with ſerious difficulties.

Firſt, vice as it is commonly underſtood, is, ſo far as regards the motive, purely negative. To virtue it is neceſſary, that it proceed from kind and benevolent intention; but malevolence, or a diſpoſition to draw a direct gratification from the ſufferings of others, is not neceſſary to vice. It is ſufficient that the agent regards with neglect theſe benevolent conſiderations

which are allied to general good. This mode of ſpeaking ſeems to ariſe from the circumſtance, that, in eſtimating the merits of others, we reaſonably regard the actual benefit or miſchief that is produced as the principal point; and conſider the diſpoſition that produces it, merely as it tends to inſure to us a continuation of benefit or injury.

Secondly, actions in the higheſt degree injurious to the public have often proceeded from motives uncommonly conſcientious. The moſt determined political aſſaſſins, Clement, Ravaillac, Damiens and Gerard, ſeem to have been deeply penetrated with anxiety for the eternal welfare of mankind. For theſe objects they ſacrificed their eaſe, and chearfully expoſed themſelves to tortures and death. Benevolence probably had its part in lighting the fires of Smithfield, and pointing the daggers of Saint Bartholomew. The authors of the Gunpowder Treaſon were in general men remarkable for the ſanctity of their lives and the auſterity of their manners.

The nature whether of religious impoſture, or of perſevering enterpriſe in general, ſeems ſcarcely to have been ſufficiently developed by the profeſſors of moral enquiry. Nothing is more difficult than for a man to recommend with enthuſiaſm, that which he does not think intrinſically admirable. Nothing is more difficult than for a man to engage in a very arduous undertaking, that he does not perſuade himſelf will in ſome way be extenſively uſeful. When archbiſhop Becket ſet himſelf againſt the whole power of Henry the ſecond, and bore every ſpecies of contumely with an unalterable ſpirit, we may eaſily diſcover the haughtineſs of the prieſt, the inſatiable ambition that delighted to ſet its foot upon the neck of kings, and the immeaſurable vanity that received with complacence the incenſe of an adoring multitude; but we may ſee with equal evidence that he regarded himſelf as the champion of the cauſe of God, and expected the crown of martyrdom in a future ſtate.

Precipitate and ſuperficial judges conclude that he who impoſes upon others, is in moſt caſes aware of the deluſion himſelf. But this ſeldom happens. Self-deception is of all things the moſt eaſy. Whoever ardently wiſhes to find a propoſition true, may be expected inſenſibly to veer towards the opinion that ſuits his inclination. It cannot be wondered at, by him who conſiders the ſubtlety of the human mind*, that belief ſhould ſcarcely ever reſt upon the mere baſis of evidence, and that arguments are always viewed through a deluſive medium, magnifying them into Alps, or diminiſhing them to nothing.

In the ſame manner as the grounds of our opinions are complicated, ſo are the motives to our actions. It is probable that no wrong action is committed from motives entirely pure. It is probable that conſcientious aſſaſſins and perſecutors have ſome mixture of ambition or the love of fame, and ſome feelings of animoſity and ill will. But the deception they put upon themſelves may nevertheleſs be complete. They ſtand acquitted at the bar of their own examination; and their injurious conduct, if conſidered under the head of motive only, is probably as pure, as much of that conduct which falls with the beſt title under the denomination of virtue.

For, thirdly, thoſe actions of men, which tend to increaſe the general happineſs, and are founded in the pureſt motives, have ſome alloy in the cauſes from which they proceed. It has been ſeen that the motives of each ſingle action in a man already arrived at maturity are innumerable†: into this mixture it is ſcarcely to be ſuppoſed that ſomething improper, mean and inconſiſtent with that impartial eſtimate of things which is the true foundation of virtue, ſhould not in-

* *Book* I, *Chap.* V, *p.* 59.
† *Book* I, *Chap.* V, *p.* 59.

insinuate itself. It seems reasonable to believe, that such actions, as are known most admirably to have contributed to the benefit of mankind, have sprung from views, of all others the least adulterated. But it cannot be doubted that many actions, considerably useful, and to a great degree well intended, have had as much alloy in their motive, as other actions which, springing from a benevolent disposition, have been extensively detrimental.

From all these considerations it appears, that if we were to adjust the standard of virtue from intention alone, we should reverse all the received ideas respecting it, giving the palm to some of the greatest pests of mankind at the expence of others who have been no contemptible benefactors. Intention no doubt is of the essence of virtue. But it will not do alone. In deciding the merits of others we are bound for the most part to proceed in the same manner as in deciding the merits of inanimate substances. The turning point is their utility. Intention is of no farther value than as it leads to utility: it is the means, and not the end. We shall overturn therefore every principle of just reasoning if we bestow our applause upon the most mischievous of mankind, merely because the mischief they produce arises from mistake; or if we regard them in any other light, than we should an engine of destruction and misery, that is constructed of very costly materials.

The reasonings of the early part of this chapter upon the subject of virtue, may equally be applied to elucidate the term duty. Duty is that mode of action on the part of the individual, which constitutes the best possible application of his capacity to the general benefit. The only distinction to be made between what was there adduced upon the subject of personal virtue, and the observations which most aptly apply to the consideration of duty, consists in this: that, though a man should in some instances neglect the best application of his capacity, he may yet be en-

titled to the appellation of virtuous; but duty is uniform, and requires of us that beſt application in every ſituation that preſents itſelf.

This way of conſidering the ſubject furniſhes us with the ſolution of a queſtion which has been ſuppoſed to be attended with conſiderable difficulty. Is it my duty to comply with the dictates of my erroneous conſcience? Was it the duty of Everard Digby to blow up king James and his parliament with gunpowder? Certainly not. Duty is the application of capacity to the real, not imaginary, benefit of mankind. It was his duty to entertain a ſincere and ardent deſire for the improvement and happineſs of others. With this duty he probably complied. But it was not his duty to apply that deſire to a purpoſe, dreadful and pregnant with inexhauſtible miſchief. With the prejudices he entertained perhaps it was impoſſible for him to do otherwiſe. But it would be abſurd to ſay that it was his duty to labour under prejudice. Perhaps it will be found that no man can in any inſtance act otherwiſe than he does*. But this, if true, will not annihilate the meaning of the term duty. It has already been ſeen that the idea of capacity and the beſt application of capacity, is equally intelligible of inanimate ſubſtances. Duty is a ſpecies under this generical term, and implies merely the beſt application of capacity in an intelligent being, whether that application originate in a ſelf-moving power, or in the irreſiſtible impulſe of motives and conſiderations preſented to the underſtanding. To talk of the duty of doing wrong, can anſwer no other purpoſe than to take away all preciſion and meaning from language.

* *Book* IV, *Chap.* V.

CHAP. V.

OF RIGHTS.

Positive rights exploded.—Province of morality unlimited.—Objection.—Consequences of the doctrine of positive rights.—Admonition considered.—Rights of kings—of communities.—Negative rights irrefragable.—Of discretion.

THE rights of man have, like many other political and moral questions, furnished a topic of eager and pertinacious dispute more by a confused and inaccurate statement of the subject of enquiry, than by any considerable difficulty attached to the subject itself.

The real or supposed rights of man are of two kinds, positive and negative; the right in certain cases to do as we list; and the right we possess to the forbearance or assistance of other men.

The first of these a just philosophy will probably induce us universally to explode.

There is no sphere in which a human being can be supposed to act, where one mode of proceeding will not, in every given instance, be more reasonable than any other mode. That mode the being is bound by every principle of justice to pursue.

Morality is nothing else but that system, which teaches us to contribute upon all occasions, to the extent of our power, to the well being and happiness of every intellectual and sensitive existence. But there is no action of our lives, which does not in some way affect that happiness. Our property, our time and our faculties may all of them be made to contribute to this end. The periods, which cannot be spent in the active production of happiness, may be spent in preparation. There is not one of our avocations or amusements, that does not by its effects render us

more or less fit to contribute our quota to the general utility. If then every one of our actions fall within the province of morals, it follows that we have no rights in relation to the selecting them. No one will maintain, that we have a right to trespass upon the dictates of morality.

It has been observed by natural philosophers, that a single grain of sand more or less in the structure of the earth, would have produced an infinite variation in its history. If this be true in inaninate nature, it is much more so in morals. The encounter of two persons of opposite sexes, so as to lead to the relation of marriage, in many cases obviously depends upon the most trivial circumstances, any one of which being changed, the relation would not have taken place. Let the instance be the father and mother of Shakespeare. If they had not been connected, Shakespeare would never have been born. If any accident had happened to the wife during her pregnancy, if she had on any day set her foot half an inch too far and fallen down a flight of stairs, if she had turned down one street instead of another, through which, it may be, some hideous object was passing along, Shakespeare might never have come alive into the world. The determination of mind, in consequence of which the child contracts some of his earliest propensities, which call out his curiosity industry and ambition, or on the other hand leave him unobserving, indolent and phlegmatic, is produced by circumstances so minute and subtle, as in few instances to have been made the subject of history. The events which afterwards produce his choice of a profession or pursuit, are not less precarious. Every one of these incidents, when it occurred, grew out of a series of incidents that had previously taken place. Every thing is connected in the universe. If any man asserted that if Alexander had not bathed himself in the river Cydnus, Shakespeare would never have written, it would be impossible to affirm that his assertion was untrue.

To the inference we are deducing from this ſtatement of facts, it may be objected, "that it is true that all events in the univerſe are connected, and the moſt memorable revolutions may depend for their exiſtence upon trivial cauſes; but it is impoſſible for us to diſcern the remote bearings and ſubtle influences of our own actions; and by what we cannot diſcern it can never be required of us to regulate our conduct." This is no doubt true, but its force in the nature of an objection will be taken away, if we conſider, firſt, that though our ignorance will juſtify us in neglecting that which, had we been better informed, we ſhould have ſeen to be moſt beneficial, it can ſcarcely be conſidered as conferring on us an abſolute right to incur that neglect. Secondly, even under the limited powers of our diſcernment, it will ſeldom happen to a man eminently conſcientious and benevolent, to ſee no appearance of ſuperiority, near or remote, direct or indirect, in favour of one ſide of any alternative propoſed to his choice rather than the other. We are bound to regulate ourſelves by the beſt judgment we can exert. Thirdly, if any thing remain to the poſitive rights of man after this deduction, and if he be at liberty to regulate his conduct in any inſtance independently of the dictates of morality, it will be, firſt, an imperfect, not an abſolute right, the offspring of ignorance and imbecility; and ſecondly, it will relate only to ſuch inſignificant matters, if ſuch there be, as, after the beſt exerciſe of human judgment, cannot be diſcerned to have the remoteſt relation to the happineſs of mankind.

Few things have contributed more to undermine the energy and virtue of the human ſpecies, than the ſuppoſition that we have a right, as it has been phraſed, to do what we will with our own. It is thus that the miſer, who accumulates to no end that which diffuſed would have conduced to the welfare of thouſands, that the luxurious man who wallows in indulgence and ſees numerous families around him pining in beggary, never

fail to tell us of their rights, and to silence animadversion and quiet the censure of their own minds, by observing, "that they came fairly into possession of their wealth, that they owe no debts and that of consequence no man has authority to enquire into their private manner of disposing of that which appertains to them." We have in reality nothing that is strictly speaking our own. We have nothing that has not a destination prescribed to it by the immutable voice of reason and justice; and respecting which, if we supersede that destination, we do not entail upon ourselves a certain portion of guilt.

As we have a duty obliging us to a certain conduct respecting our faculties and our possessions, so our neighbour has a duty respecting his admonitions and advice. He is guilty of an omission in this point, if he fail to employ every means in his power for the amendment of our errors, and to have recourse for that purpose, as he may see occasion, to the most unreserved animadversion upon our propensities and conduct. It is absurd to suppose that certain points are especially within my province, and therefore he may not afford me invited or uninvited, his assistance in arriving at a right decision. He is bound to form the best judgment he is able respecting every circumstance that falls under his observation; what he thinks he is bound to declare to others; and, if to others, certainly not less to the party immediately concerned. The worst consequences, through every rank and department of life, have arisen, from men's supposing their functions in any case to be so sacred, that every one, except the actual principal, was bound to be wholly blind and and dumb in relation to them.

The ground of this error has been a propensity, to which we are frequently subject, of concluding from the excess to the thing itself. Undoubtedly our neighbour is to be directed in his animadversions, not by a spirit of levity and impertinence, but by a calculation of the eventual utility. Undoubtedly there is one per-

ſon who muſt in almoſt all inſtances be the real actor, and other perſons may not, but with caution and ſober reflexion, occupy his time with their ſuggeſtions as to the conduct he ought to purſue. There is ſcarcely any tyranny more groſs, than that of the man who ſhould perpetually intrude upon us his crude and half-witted advices, or who, not obſerving when in point of ſtrength and clearneſs he had done juſtice to his own conception, ſhould imagine it to be his duty to repeat and preſs it upon us without end. Advice perhaps requires above all things, that it ſhould be adminiſtered with ſimplicity, diſintereſtedneſs, kindneſs and moderation.—To return.

It has been affirmed by the zealous advocates of liberty, "that princes and magiſtrates have no rights;" and no poſition can be more incontrovertible. There is no ſituation of their lives that has not its correſpondent duties. There is no power intruſted to them that they are not bound to exerciſe excluſively for the public good. It is ſtrange that perſons adopting this principle did not go a ſtep farther, and perceive that the ſame reſtrictions were applicable to ſubjects and citizens.

It is ſcarcely neceſſary to add, that, if individuals have no rights, neither has ſociety, which poſſeſſes nothing but what individuals have brought into a common ſtock. The abſurdity of the common opinion, as applied to this ſubject, is ſtill more glaring, if poſſible, than in the view in which we have already conſidered it. According to the uſual ſentiment, every club aſſembling for any civil purpoſe, every congregation of religioniſts aſſembling for the worſhip of God, has a right to eſtabliſh any proviſions or ceremonies, no matter how ridiculous or deteſtable, provided they do not interfere with the freedom of others. Reaſon lies proſtrate under their feet; they have a right to trample upon and inſult her as they pleaſe. It is in the ſame ſpirit we have been told, that every nation has a right to chooſe its form of

government. A moſt acute and original author was probably miſled by the vulgar phraſeology on this ſubject, when he aſſerted, that, " at a time when neither the people of France nor the national aſſembly were troubling themſelves about the affairs of England or the Engliſh parliament, Mr. Burke's conduct was unpardonable in commencing an unprovoked attack upon them *."

It is, no doubt, the inevitable reſult of human imperfection, that men and ſocieties of men ſhould model their conduct by the beſt judgment they are able to form, whether that judgment be ſound or erroneous. But, as it has been before ſhown that it cannot be their duty to do any thing detrimental to the general happineſs †, ſo it appears with equal evidence that they cannot have a right to do ſo. There cannot be a more abſurd propoſition than that which affirms the right of doing wrong. A miſtake of this ſort has been attended with the moſt pernicious conſequences in public and political affairs. It cannot be too ſtrongly inculcated, that ſocieties and communities of men are in no caſe empowered to eſtabliſh abſurdity and injuſtice; that the voice of the people is not, as has ſometimes been ridiculouſly aſſerted, " the voice of truth and of God;" and that univerſal conſent cannot convert wrong into right. The moſt inſignificant individual ought to hold himſelf free to animadvert upon the deciſions of the moſt auguſt aſſembly; and other men are bound in juſtice to liſten to him, in proportion to the ſoundneſs of his reaſons, and the ſtrength of his remarks, and not for any acceſſory advantages he may derive from rank or exterior importance. The moſt crowded forum, or the moſt venerable ſenate, cannot make one propoſition to be a rule of juſtice, that was not ſubſtantially ſo previouſly to their deciſion. They can only interpret and announce that law, which derives its real validity from a higher and

* *Rights of Man, page* 1. † *Chap.* IV, *p.* 135.

more immutable authority. If we submit to their decisions in cases where we are not convinced of their rectitude, this submission is an affair of prudence only; a reasonable man will lament the emergence, while he yields to the necessity. If a congregation of men agree universally to cut off their right hand, to shut their ears upon free enquiry, or to affirm two and two upon a particular occasion to be sixteen, in all these cases they are wrong, and ought unequivocally to be censured for usurping an authority that does not belong to them. They ought to be told, "Gentlemen, you are not, as in the intoxication of power you have been led to imagine, omnipotent; there is an authority greater than yours, to which you are bound assiduously to conform yourselves." No man if he were alone in the world, would have a right to make himself impotent or miserable.

So much for the positive rights of man, which if there be any cogency in the preceding arguments, are all of them superseded and rendered null by the superior claims of justice. His negative rights, when freed from the ambiguity that has arisen from the improper mixture and confounding of these two heads, will probably be found liable to little controversy.

In the first place he is said to have a right to life and personal liberty. This proposition, if admitted, must be admitted with great limitation. He has no right to his life, when his duty calls him to resign it. Other men are bound [it would be improper in strictness of speech upon the ground of the preceding explanations, to say they have a right] to deprive him of life or liberty, if that should appear in any case to be indispensably necessary to prevent a greater evil. The negative rights of man will be best understood from the following elucidation.

Every man has a certain sphere of discretion, which he has a right to expect shall not be infringed by his neighbours. This right flows from the very nature of man. First, all men are fallible: no man can be

juſtified in ſetting up his judgment as a ſtandard for others. We have no infallible judge of controverſies; each man in his own apprehenſion is right in his deciſions; and we can find no ſatisfactory mode of adjuſting their jaring pretenſions, If every one be deſirous of impoſing his ſenſe upon others, it will at laſt come to be a controverſy, not of reaſon, but of force. Secondly, even if we had an infallible criterion, nothing would be gained, unleſs it were by all men recognized as ſuch. If I were ſecured againſt the poſſibility of miſtake, miſchief and not good would accrue from impoſing my infallible truths upon my neighbour, and requiring his ſubmiſſion independently of any conviction I could produce in his underſtanding. Man is a being who can never be an object of juſt approbation, any farther than he is independent. He muſt conſult his own reaſon, draw his own concluſions, and conſcientiouſly conform himſelf to his ideas of propriety. Without this he will be neither active, nor conſiderate, nor reſolute, nor generous.

For theſe two reaſons it is neceſſary that every man ſhould ſtand by himſelf, and reſt upon his own underſtanding. For that purpoſe each muſt have his ſphere of diſcretion. No man muſt encroach upon my province, nor I upon his. He may adviſe me, moderately and without pertinaciouſneſs, but he muſt not expect to dictate to me. He may cenſure me freely and without reſerve; but he ſhould remember that I am to act by my deliberation and not his. He may exerciſe a republican boldneſs in judging, but he muſt not be peremptory and imperious in preſcribing. Force may never be reſorted to, but in the moſt extraordinary and imperious emergency. I ought to exerciſe my talents for the benefit of others; but that exerciſe muſt be the fruit of my own conviction; no man muſt attempt to preſs me into the ſervice. I ought to appropriate ſuch part of the fruits of the earth as by any accident comes into my poſſeſſion, and is not neceſſary to my benefit, to the uſe of others; but they

muſt obtain it from me by argument and expoſtulation, not by violence. It is in this principle that what is commonly called the right of property is founded. Whatever then comes into my poſſeſſion, without violence to any other man, or to the inſtitutions of ſociety, is my property. This property, it appears by the principles already laid down, I have no right to diſpoſe of at my caprice; every ſhilling of it is appropriated by the laws of morality; but no man can be juſtified, in ordinary caſes at leaſt, in forcibly extorting it from me. When the laws of morality ſhall be clearly underſtood, their excellence univerſally apprehended, and themſelves ſeen to be coincident with each man's private advantage, the idea of property in this ſenſe will remain, but no man will have the leaſt deſire, for purpoſes of oſtentation or luxury, to poſſeſs more than his neighbours.

A ſecond branch of the negative rights of man, conſiſts in the right each man poſſeſſes to the aſſiſtance of his neighbour. This will be fully elucidated hereafter*.

* *Book* VIII.

CHAP. VI.

OF THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

Foundation of virtue.—Human actions regulated: 1. *by the nature of things.*—2. *by positive institution.—Tendency of the latter:* 1. *to excite virtue.—Its equivocal character in this respect.*—2. *to inform the judgment.—Its inaptitude for that purpose.—Province of conscience considered.—Tendency of an interference with that province.—Unsuitableness of punishment—either to impress new sentiments—or to strengthen old ones.—Recapitulation.*

IT has appeared, that the most essential of those rights which constitute the peculiar sphere appropriate to each individual, and the right upon which every other depends as its basis, is the right of private judgment. It will therefore be of use to say something distinctly on this head.

To a rational being there can be but one rule of conduct, justice, and one mode of ascertaining that rule, the exercise of his understanding.

If in any instance I am made the mechanical instrument of absolute violence, in that instance, I fall under a pure state of external slavery. If on the other hand, not being operated upon by absolute compulsion, I am wholly prompted by something that is frequently called by that name, and act from the hope of reward or the fear of punishment, the subjection I suffer is doubtless less aggravated, but the effect upon my moral habits may be in a still higher degree injurious.

In the mean time, with respect to the conduct I should observe upon such occasions, a distinction is to be made. Justice, as it was defined in a preceding chapter, is coincident with utility. I am myself a part of the great whole, and my happiness is a part of that

complex view of things by which juſtice is regulated. The hope of reward therefore and the fear of puniſhment, however wrong in themſelves, and inimical to the improvement of the mind, are motives which, ſo long as they are reſorted to in ſociety, muſt and ought to have ſome influence with my mind.

There are two deſcriptions of tendency that may belong to any action, the tendency which it poſſeſſes by the neceſſary and unalterable laws of exiſtence, and the tendency which reſults from the arbitrary interference of ſome intelligent being. The nature of happineſs and miſery, pleaſure and pain, is independent of poſitive inſtitution. It is immutably true that whatever tends to procure a balance of the former is to be deſired, and whatever tends to procure a balance of the latter is to be rejected. In like manner there are certain features and principles inſeparable from ſuch a being as man; there are cauſes which, in their operation upon him, are in their own nature generative of pleaſure, and ſome of a pleaſure more excellent than others. Every action has a reſult which may be ſaid to be peculiarly its own, and which will always follow upon it, unleſs ſo far as it may happen to be ſuperſeded by the operation of other and extrinſical cauſes.

The tendency of poſitive inſtitution is of two ſorts, to furniſh an additional motive to the practice of virtue or right, and to inform the underſtanding, as to what actions are right, and what actions are wrong. Much cannot be ſaid in commendation of either of theſe tendencies.

Firſt, poſitive inſtitution may furniſh an additional motive to the practice of virtue. I have an opportunity of eſſentially contributing to the advantage of twenty individuals; they will be benefited and no other perſons will ſuſtain a material injury. I ought to embrace this opportunity. Here let us ſuppoſe poſitive inſtitution to interfere, and to annex ſome great perſonal reward to the diſcharge of my duty. This immediately changes the nature of the action. Before, I perferred

it for its intrinsic excellence. Now so far as the positive institution operates, I prefer it, because some person has arbitrarily annexed to it a great weight of self-interest. But virtue, considered as the quality of an intelligent being, depends upon the disposition with which the action is accompanied. Under a positive institution then, this very action, which is intrinsically virtuous, may, so far as relates to the agent, become vicious. The vicious man would before have neglected the advantage of these twenty individuals, because he would not bring a certain inconvenience or trouble upon himself. The same man with the same disposition will now promote their advantage, because his own welfare is concerned in it. Twenty, other things equal, is twenty times better than one. He that is not governed by the moral arithmetic of the case, or who acts from a disposition directly at war with that arithmetic, is unjust *. In other words, moral improvement will be forwarded, in proportion as we are exposed to no other influence, than that of the tendency which belongs to an action by the necessary and unalterable laws of existence. This is probably the meaning of the otherwise vague and obscure principle, "that we should do good, regardless of the consequences;" and by that other, "that we may not do evil, from the prospect of good to result from it." The case would have been rendered still more glaring, if, instead of the welfare of twenty, we had supposed the welfare of millions to have been concerned. In reality, whether the disparity be great or small, the inference must be the same.

Secondly, positive institution may inform the understanding, as to what actions are right, and what actions are wrong. Here it may be of advantage to us to reflect upon the terms understanding and information. Understanding, particularly as it is concerned with moral subjects, is the percipient of truth. This is its proper sphere. Information, so far as it

* *Book* IV, *Chap.* VIII.

is genuine, is a portion detached from the great body of truth. You inform me, "that Euclid asserts the three angles of a plane triangle to be equal to two right angles." Still I am unacquainted with the truth of this proposition. "But Euclid has demonstrated it. His demonstration has existed for two thousand years, and during that term has proved satisfactory to every man by whom it has been understood." I am nevertheless uninformed. The knowledge of truth lies in the perceived agreement or disagreement of the terms of a proposition. So long as I am unacquainted with the middle term by means of which they may be compared, so long as they are incommensurate to my understanding, you may have furnished me with a principle from which I may reason truly to farther consequences; but as to the principle itself I may strictly be said to know nothing.

Every proposition has an intrinsic evidence of its own. Every consequence has premises from which it flows; and upon them, and not upon any thing else, its validity depends. If you could work a miracle to prove, "that the three angles of a triangle were equal to two right angles," I should still know, that the proposition had been either true or false previously to the exhibition of the miracle; and that there was no necessary connection between any one of its terms and the miracle exhibited. The miracle would take off my attention from the true question to a question altogether different, that of authority. By the authority adduced I might be prevailed on to yield an irregular assent to the proposition; but I could not properly be said to perceive its truth.

But this is not all. If it were, it might perhaps be regarded as a refinement foreign to the concerns of human life. Positive institutions do not content themselves with requiring my assent to certain propositions, in consideration of the respectable testimony by which they are inforced. This would amount to no more, than advice flowing from a respectable quarter, which,

after all, I might reject if it did not accord with the mature judgment of my own understanding. But in the very nature of these institutions there is included, a sanction, a motive either of punishment or reward to induce me to obedience.

It is commonly said, "that positive institutions ought to leave me perfectly free in matters of conscience, but may properly interfere with my conduct in civil concerns." But this distinction seems to have been very lightly taken up. What sort of moralist must he be, who makes no conscience of what passes in his intercourse with other men? Such a distinction proceeds upon the supposition, "that it is of great consequence whether I bow to the east or the west; whether I call the object of my worship Jehovah or Alla; whether I pay a priest in a surplice or a black coat. These are points, in which an honest man ought to be rigid and inflexible. But as to those other whether he shall be a tyrant, a slave or a free citizen; whether he shall bind himself with multiplied oaths impossible to be performed, or be a rigid observer of truth; whether he shall swear allegiance to a king *de jure* or a king *de facto*, to the best or the worst of all possible governments; respecting these points he may safely commit his conscience to the keeping of the civil magistrate." In reality, by as many instances as I act contrary to the unbiassed dictate of my own judgment, by so much I abdicate the most valuable part of the character of man.

I am satisfied at present, that a certain conduct, suppose it be a rigid attention to the confidence of private conversation, is incumbent upon me. You tell me, "there are certain cases of such peculiar emergency as to supersede this rule." Perhaps I think there are not. If I admit your proposition, a wide field of enquiry is opened, respecting what cases do or do not deserve to be considered as exceptions. It is little likely that we should agree

respecting all these cases. How then does the law treat me, for my conscientious discharge of what I conceive to be my duty? Because I will not turn informer (which, it may be, I think an infamous character) against my most valued friend, the law accuses me of misprision of treason, felony or murder, and perhaps hangs me. I believe a certain individual to be a confirmed villain, and a most dangerous member of society, and feel it to be my duty to warn others, perhaps the public, against the effect of his vices. Because I publish what I know to be true, the law convicts me of libel, *scandalum magnatum*, and crimes of I know not what complicated denomination.

If the evil stopped here, it would be well. If I only suffered a certain calamity, suppose death, I could endure it. Death has hitherto been the common lot of men, and I expect at some time or other to submit to it. Human society must sooner or later be deprived of its individual members, whether they be valuable, or whether they be inconsiderable. But the punishment acts not only retrospectively upon me, but prospectively upon my contemporaries and countrymen. My neighbour entertains the same opinion respecting the conduct he ought to hold as I did. The executioner of public justice however interposes with a powerful argument, to convince him that he has mistaken the path of abstract rectitude.

What sort of converts will be produced by this unfeeling logic? "I have deeply reflected," suppose, "upon the nature of virtue, and am convinced that a certain proceeding is incumbent on me. But the hangman, supported by an act of parliament, assures me I am mistaken." If I yield my opinion to his *dictum*, my action becomes modified, and my character also. An influence like this is inconsistent with all generous magnanimity of spirit, all ardent impartiality in the discovery of truth, and all inflexible perseverance in its assertion. Countries, exposed to the perpetual interference of decrees instead of arguments, exhibit

within their boundaries the mere phantoms of men. We can never judge from an obſervation of their inhabitants what men would be, if they knew of no appeal from the tribunal of conſcience, and if, whatever they thought, they dared to ſpeak, and dared to act.

At preſent there will perhaps occur to the majority of readers but few inſtances of laws, which may be ſuppoſed to interfere with the conſcientious diſcharge of duty. A conſiderable number will occur in the courſe of the preſent enquiry. More would readily offer themſelves to a patient reſearch. Men are ſo ſucceſsfully reduced to a common ſtandard by the operation of poſitive law, that in moſt countries they are capable of little more than, like parrots, repeating what others have ſaid. This uniformity is capable of being produced in two ways, by energy of mind and indefatigableneſs of enquiry, enabling a conſiderable number to penetrate with equal ſucceſs into the receſſes of truth; and by puſillanimity of temper and a frigid indifference to right and wrong, produced by the penalties which are ſuſpended over ſuch as ſhall diſintereſtedly enquire, and communicate and act upon the reſult of their enquiries. It is eaſy to perceive which of theſe is the cauſe of the uniformity that prevails in the preſent inſtance.

One thing more in inforcement of this important conſideration. "I have done ſomething," ſuppoſe, "which though wrong in itſelf, I believe to be right; or I have done ſomething which I uſually admit to be wrong; but my conviction upon the ſubject is not ſo clear and forcible, as to prevent my yielding to a powerful temptation." There can be no doubt, that the proper way of conveying to my underſtanding a truth of which I am ignorant, or of impreſſing upon me a firmer perſuaſion of a truth with which I am acquainted, is by an appeal to my reaſon. Even an angry expoſtulation with me upon my conduct, will but excite ſimilar paſſions in me, and cloud, inſtead of illuminate, my underſtanding. There is cer-

tainly a way of expreſſing truth, with ſuch benevolence as to command attention, and ſuch evidence as to inforce conviction in all caſes whatever.

Puniſhment inevitably excites in the ſufferer, and ought to excite, a ſenſe of injuſtice. Let its purpoſe be to convince me of the truth of a propoſition, which I at preſent believe to be falſe. It is not, abſtractedly conſidered, of the nature of an argument, and therefore it cannot begin with producing conviction. Puniſhment is a comparatively ſpecious name; but is in reality nothing more than force put upon one being by another who happens to be ſtronger. But ſtrength apparently does not conſtitute juſtice. The caſe of puniſhment, in the view in which we now conſider it, is the caſe of you and me differing in opinion, and your telling me that you muſt be right, ſince you have a more brawny arm, or have applied your mind more to the acquiring ſkill in your weapons than I have.

But let us ſuppoſe, "that I am convinced of my error, but that my conviction is ſuperficial and fluctuating, and the object you propoſe is to render it durable and profound." Ought it to be thus durable and profound? there are no doubt arguments and reaſons calculated to render it ſo. Is the ſubject in reality problematical, and do you wiſh by the weight of your blows to make up for the deficiency of your logic? This can never be defended. An appeal to force muſt appear to both parties, in proportion to the ſoundneſs of their underſtanding, to be a confeſſion of imbecility. He that has recourſe to it, would have no occaſion for this expedient, if he were ſufficiently acquainted with the powers of that truth it is his office to communicate. If there be any man who, in ſuffering puniſhment, is not conſcious of injuſtice, he muſt have had his mind previouſly debaſed by ſlavery, and his ſenſe of moral right and wrong blunted by a ſeries of oppreſſion.

If there be any truth more unqueſtionable than the reſt, it is, that every man is bound to the exertion of

his faculties in the discovery of right, and to the carrying into effect all the right with which he is acquainted. It may be granted that an infallible standard, if it could be discovered, would be considerably beneficial. But this infallible standard itself would be of little use in human affairs, unless it had the property of reasoning as well as deciding, of enlightening the mind as well as constraining the body. If a man be in some cases obliged to prefer his own judgment, he is in all cases obliged to consult that judgment, before he can determine whether the matter in question be of the sort provided for or no. So that from this reasoning it ultimately appears, that no man is obliged to conform to any rule of conduct, farther than the rule is found consistent with justice.

Such are the genuine principles of human society. Such would be the unconstrained condition of its members, in a state where every individual within the society, and every neighbour without, was capable of listening with sobriety to the dictates of reason. We shall not fail to be impressed with considerable regret, if, when we descend to the present mixed characters of mankind, we find ourselves obliged in any degree to depart from so simple and grand a principle. The universal exercise of private judgment is a doctrine so unspeakably beautiful, that the true politician will certainly feel infinite reluctance in admitting the idea of interfering with it. A principle object in the subsequent stages of enquiry will be to discuss the emergency of the cases that may be thought to demand this interference.

AN

ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

POLITICAL JUSTICE.

BOOK III.

PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT.

CHAP. I.

SYSTEMS OF POLITICAL WRITERS.

The question stated.—First hypothesis: government founded in superior strength.—Second hypothesis: government jure divino.*—Third hypothesis: the social contract.—The first hypothesis examined.—The second.—Criterion of divine right:* 1. *patriarchal descent—*2. *justice.*

HAVING in the preceding book attempted a general delineation of the principles of rational society, it is proper that we in the next place proceed to the topic of government.

It has hitherto been the persuasion of communities of men in all ages and countries, that there are occasions in which it becomes necessary, to supersede private judgment, for the sake of public good, and to

control the acts of the individual, by an act to be performed in the name of the whole.

Previously to our deciding upon this queſtion, it will be of advantage to enquire into the nature of government, and the manner in which this control may be exerciſed with the ſmalleſt degree of violence and uſurpation in regard to the individual. This point being determined, will aſſiſt us finally to aſcertain, both the quantity of evil which government in its beſt form involves, and the urgency of the caſe which has been ſuppoſed to demand its interference.

There can be little ground to queſtion the neceſſity, and conſequently the juſtice, of force to be in ſome caſes interpoſed between individual and individual. Violence is ſo prompt a mode of deciding differences of opinion and contentions of paſſion, that there will infallibly be ſome perſons who will reſort to this mode. How is their violence to be repreſſed, or prevented from being accompanied occaſionally with the moſt tragical effects? Violence muſt neceſſarily be preceded by an opinion of the mind dictating that violence; and, as he who firſt has reſort to force inſtead of argument, is unqueſtionably erroneous, the beſt and moſt deſirable mode of correcting him, is by convincing him of his error. But the urgency of the caſe, when, for example, a dagger is pointed to my own breaſt or that of another, may be ſuch as not to afford time for expoſtulation. Hence the propriety and duty of defence.

Is not defence equally neceſſary, on the part of a community, againſt a foreign enemy, or the contumacy of its own members? This is perhaps the moſt forcible view, in which the argument in favour of the inſtitution of government has yet been placed. But, waving this queſtion for the preſent the inquiry now popoſed is, if action on the part of the community ſhould in any inſtance be found requiſite, in what manner is it proper or juſt that the force acting in behalf of the community ſhould be organiſed?

There are three hypotheſes that have been principally maintained upon this ſubject. Firſt, the ſyſtem of force, according to which it is affirmed, "that, inaſmuch as it is neceſſary that the great maſs of mankind ſhould be held under the ſubjection of compulſory reſtraint, there can be no other criterion of that reſtraint, than the power of the individuals who lay claim to its exerciſe, the foundation of which power exiſts in the unequal degrees, in which corporal ſtrength and intellectual ſagacity are diſtributed among mankind."

There is a ſecond claſs of reaſoners, who deduce the origin of all government from divine right, and affirm, "that, as men derived their exiſtence from an infinite creator at firſt, ſo are they ſtill ſubject to his providential care and of conſequence owe allegiance to their civil governors, as to a power which he has thought fit to ſet over them."

The third ſyſtem is that which has been moſt uſually maintained by the friends of equality and juſtice; the ſyſtem according to which the individuals of any ſociety are ſupppoſed to have entered into a contract with their governors or with each other, and which founds the authority of government in the conſent of the governed.

The two firſt of theſe hypotheſes my eaſily be diſmiſſed. That of force appears to proceed upon the total negation of abſtract and immutable juſtice, affirming every government to be right, that is poſſeſſed of power ſufficient to enforce its decrees. It puts a violent termination upon all political ſcience; and is calculated for nothing farther than to perſuade men, to ſit down quietly under their preſent diſadvantages, whatever they may be, and not exert themſelves to diſcover a remedy for the evils they ſuffer. The ſecond hypotheſis is of an equivocal nature. It either coincides with the firſt, and affirms all exiſting power to be alike of divine derivation; or it muſt remain totally uſeleſs, till a criterion can be found, to diſtinguiſh thoſe governments which are approved by God, from thoſe

which cannot lay claim to that sanction. The criterion of patriarchal descent will be of no avail, till the true claimant and rightful heir can be discovered. If we make utility and justice the test of God's approbation, this hypothesis will be liable to little objection; but then on the other hand little will be gained by it, since those who have not introduced divine right into the argument, will yet readily grant, that a government which can be shewn to be agreeable to utility and justice, is a rightful government.

The third hypothesis demands a more careful examination. If any error have insinuated itself into the support of truth, it becomes of particular consequence to detect it. Nothing can be of more importance, than to separate prejudice and mistake on the one hand, from reason and demonstration on the other. Wherever they have been confounded, the cause of truth must necessarily be the sufferer. That cause, so far from being injured by a dissolution of the unnatural alliance, may be expected to derive from that dissolution a superior degree of prosperity and lustre.

CHAP. II.

OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT.

Queries proposed.—Who are the contracting parties?—What is the form of engagement?—Over how long a period does the contract extend?—To how great a variety of propositions?—Can it extend to laws hereafter to be made?—Addresses of adhesion considered.—Power of a majority.

UPON the first statement of the system of a social contract various difficulties present themselves. Who are the parties to this contract? For whom did they consent, for themselves only or for others? For how long a time is this contract to be considered as

binding? If the consent of every individual be necessary, in what manner is that consent to be given? Is it to be tacit, or declared in express terms?

Little will be gained for the cause of equality and justice, if our ancestors, at the first institution of government, had a right indeed of choosing the system of regulations under which they thought proper to live, but at the same time could barter away the understandings and independence of all that came after them to the latest posterity. But, if the contract must be renewed in each successive generation, what periods must be fixed on for that purpose? And if I be obliged to submit to the established government till my turn comes to assent to it, upon what principle is that obligation founded? Surely not upon the contract into which my father entered before I was born?

Secondly, what is the nature of the consent, in consequence of which I am to be reckoned a party to the frame of any political constitution? It is usually said, "that acquiescence is sufficient; and that this acquiescence is to be inferred from my living quietly under the protection of the laws." But if this be true, an end is as effectually put to all political science, all discrimination of better and worse, as by any system invented by the most slavish sycophant that ever existed. Upon this hypothesis every government that is quietly submitted to is a lawful government, whether it be the usurpation of Cromwel or the tyranny of Caligula. Acquiescence is frequently nothing more than a choice on the part of the individual of what he deems the least evil. In many cases it is not so much as this, since the peasant and the artisan, who form the bulk of a nation, however dissatisfied with the government of their country, seldom have it in their power to transport themselves to another. It is also to be observed upon the system of acquiescence, that it is in little agreement with the established opinions and practices of mankind. Thus what has been called the law of nations, lays least stress upon the

allegiance of a foreigner ſettling among us, though his acquieſcence is certainly moſt complete; while natives removing into an uninhabited region are claimed by the mother country, and removing into a neighbouring territory are puniſhed by municipal law, if they take arms againſt the country in which they were born. But ſurely acquieſcence can ſcarcely be conſtrued into conſent, while the individuals concerned are wholly unappriſed of the authority intended to be reſted upon it*.

Mr. Locke, the great champion of the doctrine of an original contract, has been aware of this difficulty, and therefore obſerves, that "a tacit conſent indeed obliges a man to obey the laws of any government, as long as he has any poſſeſſions, or enjoyment of any part of the dominions of that government; but nothing can make a man a member of the commonwealth, but his actually entering into it by poſitive engagement, and expreſs promiſe and compact†." A ſingular diſtinction! implying upon the face of it, that an acquieſcence, ſuch as has juſt been deſcribed, is ſufficient to render a man amenable to the penal regulations of ſociety; but that his own conſent is neceſſary to entitle him to the privileges of a citizen.

A third objection to the ſocial contract will ſuggeſt itſelf, as ſoon as we attempt to aſcertain the extent of the obligation, even ſuppoſing it to have been entered into in the moſt ſolemn manner by every member of the community. Allowing that I am called upon, at the period of my coming of age for example, to declare my aſſent or diſſent to any ſyſtem of opinions or any code of practical inſtitutes; for how long a period does this declaration bind me? Am I precluded from better information for the whole courſe of my life? And, if not for my whole life,

* *Hume's Eſſays, Part* II, *Eſſay* xii.
† *Treatiſe of Government, Book* II, *Ch.* viii, § 119, 122.

why for a year, a week or even an hour? If my deliberate judgment or my real sentiment be of no avail in the case, in what sense can it be affirmed that all lawful government is founded in my consent?

But the question of time is not the only difficulty. If you demand my assent to any proposition, it is necessary that the proposition should be stated simply and clearly. So numerous are the varieties of human understanding, in all cases where its independence and integrity are sufficiently preserved, that there is little chance of any two men coming to a precise agreement about ten successive propositions that are in their own nature open to debate. What then can be more absurd than to present to me the laws of England in fifty volumes folio, and call upon me to give an honest and uninfluenced vote upon their contents?

But the social contract, considered as the foundation of civil government, requires of me more than this. I am not only obliged to consent to all the laws that are actually upon record, but to all the laws that shall hereafter be made. It was under this view of the subject, that Rousseau, in tracing the consequences of the social contract, was led to assert, that "the great body of the people, in whom the sovereign authority resides, can neither delegate nor resign it. The essence of that authority," he adds, "is the general will; and will cannot be represented. It must either be the same or another; there is no alternative. The deputies of the people cannot be its representatives; they are merely its attorneys. The laws which the community does not ratify in person, are no laws, are nullities*."

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* "*La souveraineté ne peut être representée, par la même raison qu'elle ne peut être alienée; elle consiste essentiellement dans la volonté générale, et la volonté ne se represente point: elle est la même, ou elle est autre; il n'y a point de milieu. Les deputés du peuple ne sont donc point ses repre-*

The difficulty here ſtated has been endeavoured to be provided againſt by ſome late advocates for liberty, in the way of addreſſes of adheſion; addreſſes, originating in the various diſtricts and departments of a nation, and without which no regulation of conſtitutional importance is to be deemed valid. But this is a very ſuperficial remedy. The addreſſers of courſe have ſeldom any other alternative than that above alluded to, of indiſcriminate admiſſion or rejection. There is an infinite difference between the firſt deliberation, and the ſubſequent exerciſe of a negative. The former is a real power, the latter is ſeldom more than the ſhadow of a power. Not to add, that addreſſes are a moſt precarious and equivocal mode of collecting the ſenſe of a nation. They are uſually voted in a tumultuous and ſummary manner; they are carried along by the tide of party; and the ſignatures annexed to them are obtained by indirect and accidental methods, while multitudes of byſtanders, unleſs upon ſome extraordinary occaſion, remain ignorant of or indifferent to the tranſaction.

Laſtly, if government be founded in the conſent of the people, it can have no power over any individual by whom that conſent is refuſed. If a tacit conſent be not ſufficient, ſtill leſs can I be deemed to have conſented to a meaſure upon which I put an expreſs negative. This immediately follows from the obſervations of Rouſſeau. If the people, or the individuals of whom the people is conſtituted, cannot delegate their authority to a repreſentative; neither can any individual delegate his authority to a majority, in an aſſembly of which he is himſelf a member. That muſt ſurely be a ſingular ſpecies of conſent, the external

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ſentans, ils ne ſont que ſes commiſſaires; ils ne peuvent rien conclure definitivement. Toute loi que le peuple en perſonne n'a pas ratifiée, eſt nulle; ce n'eſt point une loi."

Du Contrat Social, Liv. III. *Chap.* XV.

indications of which are often to be found in an unremitting oppoſition in the firſt inſtance, and compulſory ſubjection in the ſecond.

CHAP. III.

OF PROMISES.

Promiſes not the foundation of morality—are, abſolutely conſidered, an evil—are of unfrequent neceſſity.—Imperfect promiſes unavoidable.—Perfect promiſes in ſome caſes neceſſary.—Obligation of promiſes—of the ſame nature as the obligation not to invade another man's property—admits of gradations.—Recapitulation.—Application.

THE whole principle of an original contract reſts upon the obligation under which we are conceived to be placed to obſerve our promiſes. The reaſoning upon which it is founded is, "that we have promiſed obedience to government, and therefore are bound to obey." The doctrine of a ſocial contract would never have been thought worth the formality of an argument, had it not been preſumed to be one of our firſt and paramount obligations, to perform our engagements. It may be proper therefore to enquire into the nature of this obligation.

And here the firſt obſervation that offers itſelf, upon the principle of the doctrines already delivered*, is, that promiſes and compacts are in no ſenſe the foundation of morality.

The foundation of morality is juſtice. The principle of virtue is an irreſiſtible deduction from the wants of one man, and the ability of another to relieve them. It is not becauſe I have promiſed, that I am bound to do that for my neighbour, which will be beneficial to him, and not injurious to me. This is an

* *Book* II, *Ch.* II, *&c.*

obligation which arises out of no compact, direct or understood; and would still remain, though it were impossible that I should experience a return either from him or any other human being. It is not on account of any promise or previous engagement, that I am bound to tell my neighbour the truth. Undoubtedly one of the reasons why I should do so, is, because the obvious use of the faculty of speech is to inform, and not to mislead. But it is an absurd account of this motive, to say, that my having recourse to the faculty of speech, amounts to a tacit engagement that I will use it for its genuine purposes. The true ground of confidence between man and man, is the knowledge we have of the motives by which the human mind is influenced; our perception, that the motives to deceive can but rarely occur, while the motives to veracity will govern the stream of human actions.

This position will be made still more incontrovertible, if we bestow a moment's attention upon the question, Why should we observe our promises? The only rational answer that can be made is, because it tends to the welfare of intelligent beings. But this answer is equally cogent, if applied to any other branch of morality. It is therefore absurd to rest the foundation of morality thus circuitously upon promises, when it may with equal propriety be rested upon that from which promises themselves derive their obligation *.

Again; when I enter into an engagement, I engage for that which is in its own nature conducive to human happiness, or which is not so. Can my engagement always render that which before was injurious agreeable to, and that which was beneficial the opposite of duty? Previously to my entering into a promise, there is something which I ought to promise, and something which I ought not. Previously to my entering into a promise, all modes of action were not indifferent. Nay,

* *Hume's Essays, Part* II, *Essay* xii.

the very oppoſite of this is true. Every conceivable mode of action has its appropriate tendency and ſhade of tendency to benefit or to miſchief, and conſequently its appropriate claim to be performed or avoided. Thus clearly does it appear that promiſes and compacts are not the foundation of morality.

Secondly, I obſerve that promiſes are, abſolutely conſidered, an evil, and ſtand in oppoſition to the genuine and wholeſome exerciſe of an intellectual nature.

Juſtice has already appeared to be the ſum of moral and political duty. But the meaſure of juſtice is the uſeful or injurious characters of the men with whom I am concerned; the criterion of juſtice is the influence my conduct will have upon the ſtock of general good. Hence it inevitably follows, that the motives, by which duty requires me to govern my actions, muſt be ſuch as are of general application.

What is it then to which the obligation of a promiſe applies? What I have promiſed, is what I ought to have performed, if no promiſe had intervened, or it is not. It is conducive or not conducive to the generating of human happineſs. If it be the former, then promiſe comes in merely as an additional inducement, in favour of that which, in the eye of morality, was already of indiſpenſable obligation. It teaches me to do ſomething from a precarious and temporary motive, which ought to be done for its intrinſic recommendations. If therefore right motives and a pure intention are conſtituent parts of virtue, promiſes are clearly at variance with virtue.

But promiſes will not always come in reinforcement of that which was duty before the promiſe was made. When it is otherwiſe, there is obviouſly a contention between what would have been obligatory, if no promiſe had intervened, and what the promiſe which has been given, has a tendency to render obligatory.

Nor can it with much cogency be alleged in this argument, that promiſes may at leaſt aſſume an empire

over things indifferent. There is nothing which is truly indifferent. All things in the univerſe are connected together*. It is true, that many of theſe links in human affairs, are too ſubtle to be traced by our groſſer optics. But we ſhould obſerve as many of them as we are able. He that is eaſily ſatisfied as to the morality of his conduct, will ſuppoſe that queſtions of duty are of rare occurrence, and perhaps lament that there is ſo little within his ſphere to perform. But he that is anxiouſly alive to the inſpirations of virtue, will ſcarcely find an hour in which he cannot, by act or preparation, contribute to the general weal. If then every ſhilling of our property, and every faculty of our mind, have received their deſtination from the principles of unalterable juſtice, promiſes have ſcarcely an atom of ground upon which they can properly and legitimately be called to decide.

There is another conſideration of great weight in this caſe. Our faculties and our poſſeſſions are the means by which we are enabled to benefit others. Our time is the theatre in which only theſe means can unfold themſelves. There is nothing the right diſpoſal of which is more ſacred. In order to the employing our faculties and our poſſeſſions in the way moſt conducive to the general good, we are bound to acquire all the information which our opportunities enable us to acquire. Now one of the principal means of information, is time. We muſt therefore devote to that object all the time our ſituation will allow. But we abridge, and that in the moſt eſſential point, the time of gaining information, if we bind ourſelves to-day to the conduct we will obſerve two months hence. He who thus anticipates upon the ſtores of knowledge, is certainly not leſs improvident than he who lives by anticipating the ſtores of fortune.

An active and conſcientious man will continually add to his materials of judgment. Nor is it enough to ſay, that every man ought to regard his judgment

* *Book* II, *Chap.* V.

as immature, and look forward with impatience to the moment which shall detect his present oversights. Beside this it will always happen, that, however mature the faculties of any individual may deserve to be considered, he will be perpetually acquiring new information as to that respecting which his conduct is to be decided at some future period. Let the case be of an indentured servant. Why should I, unless there be something in the circumstances obliging me to submit to this disadvantage, engage to allow him to reside for a term of years under my roof, and to employ towards him a uniform mode of treatment, whatever his character may prove in the sequel? Why should he engage to live with and serve me, however tyrannical, cruel or absurd may be my carriage towards him? We shall both of us hereafter know more of each other, and of the benefits or inconveniences attendant on our connection. Why preclude ourselves from the use of this knowledge? Such a situation will inevitably generate a perpetual struggle between the independent dictates of reason, and the conduct which the particular compact into which we have entered, may be supposed to prescribe.

It follows from what has been here adduced, that promises, in the same sense as has already been observed of government, are an evil, though, it may be, in some cases a necessary evil.—To remove the obscurity which might otherwise accompany this mode of expression, it is perhaps proper to advert to the sense in which the word evil is here used.

Evil may be either general or individual: an event may either be productive of evil in its direct and immediate operation, or in a just balance and comprehensive estimate of all the effects with which it is pregnant. In whichsoever of these senses the word is understood, the evil is not imaginary, but real.

Evil is a term which differs from pain only as it has a more comprehensive meaning. It may be defined to signify whatever is painful itself, or is con-

nected with pain as an antecedent is connected with its consequent. Thus explained, it appears that a thing not immediately painful may be evil, but in a somewhat improper and imperfect sense. It bears the name of evil not upon its own account. Nothing is evil in the fullest sense but pain.

To this it may be added that pain is always an evil. Pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, constitute the whole ultimate subject of moral enquiry. There is nothing desirable, but the obtaining of the one, and the avoiding of the other. All the researches of human imagination cannot add a single article to this summary of good. Hence it follows that, wherever pain exists, there is evil. Were it otherwise, there would be no such thing as evil. If pain in one individual be not an evil, then it would not be an evil for pain to be felt by every individual that exists, and for ever. The universe is no more than a collection of individuals.

To illustrate this by an obvious example. The amputation of a leg is an evil of considerable magnitude. The pain attendant on the operation is exquisite. The cure is slow and tormenting. When cured, the man who has suffered the amputation, is precluded for ever from a variety both of agreeable amusements and useful occupations. Suppose him to suffer this operation from pure wantonness, and we shall then see its calamity in the most striking light. Suppose on the other hand the operation to be the only alternative for stopping a mortification, and it becomes relatively good. But it does not upon this account cease to be an absolute evil. The painful sensation, at least to a considerable degree remains; and the abridgment of his pleasures and utility for the rest of his life is not one whit altered.

The case of promises is considerably similar to this. So far as they have any effect, they depose us, as to the particular to which they relate, from the use of our own understanding; they call off our attention

from the direct tendencies of our conduct, and fix it upon a merely local and precarious conſideration. There may be caſes in which they are neceſſary and ought to be employed: but we ſhould never ſuffer ourſelves by their temporary utility to be induced to forget their intrinſic nature, and the demerits which adhere to them independently of any peculiar concurrence of circumſtances.

Thirdly, it may be added to the preceding obſervations, that promiſes are by no means of ſo frequent neceſſity as has been often imagined.

It may be aſked, "How, without the intervention of promiſes, can the affairs of the world be carried on?" To this it will be a ſufficient anſwer in the majority of inſtances, to ſay, that they will be beſt carried on by rational and intelligent beings acting as if they were rational and intelligent. Why ſhould it be ſuppoſed that affairs would not for the moſt part go on ſufficiently well, though my neighbour could no farther depend upon my aſſiſtance, than it appeared reaſonable to grant it? This will, upon many occaſions, be a ſufficient dependance, if I be honeſt; nor will he, if he be honeſt, deſire any thing farther.

But it will be elleged, "Human purſuits are often of a continued tenour, made up of a ſeries of actions, each of which is adopted not for its own ſake, but for the ſake of ſome concluſion in which it terminates. Many of theſe depend for their ſucceſs upon co-operation and concert. It is therefore neceſſary that I ſhould have ſome clear and ſpecific reaſon to depend upon the fidelity of my coadjutor, that ſo I may not be in danger, when I have for a length of time perſiſted in my exertions, of being fruſtrated by ſome change that his ſentiments have undergone in the interval." To this it may be replied, that ſuch a pledge of fidelity is leſs frequently neceſſary than is ordinarily imagined. Were it to be ſuperſeded in a variety of caſes, men would be taught to have more regard to their own exertions, and leſs to the aſſiſtance of others,

which caprice may refuse, or justice oblige them to withhold. They would acquire such merit, as should oblige every honest man, if needful, to hasten to their succour; and engage in such pursuits, as, not depending upon the momentary caprice of individuals, rested for their success upon the less precarious nature of general circumstances.

Having specified the various limitations that exist as to the utility of promises, it remains for us to discuss their form and their obligation in the cases where they may be conceived to be necessary.

Promises are of two kinds, perfect and imperfect. A perfect promise is where the declaration of intention is made by me, for the express purpose of serving as a ground of expectation to my neighbour respecting my future conduct. An imperfect promise is where it actually thus serves as a ground of expectation, though that was not my purpose when I made the declaration. Imperfect promises are of two classes: I may have reason, or I may have no reason to know, when I make the declaration, that it will be acted upon by my neighbour, though not assuming the specific form of an engagement.

As to imperfect promises it may be observed that they are wholly unavoidable. No man can always refrain from declaring his intention as to his future conduct. Nay, it should seem that, in many cases, if a man enquire of me the state of my mind in this respect, duty obliges me to inform him of this as I would of any other fact. Were it otherwise, a perpetual coldness and reserve would pervade all human intercourse. But the improvement of mankind rests upon nothing so essentially as upon the habitual practice of candour, frankness and sincerity.

Perfect promises will also in various instances occur. I have occasion for an interview with a particular person to-morrow. I inform him of my intention of being upon a certain spot at a given hour of the day.

It is convenient to him to go to the ſame place at the ſame time for the purpoſe of meeting me. In this caſe it is impoſſible to prevent the mutual declaration of intention from ſerving as a ſort of pledge of the performance. Qualifying expreſſions will make little alteration: the ordinary circumſtances which qualify engagements, will in moſt caſes be underſtood whether they are ſtated or no. Appointments of this ſort, ſo far from deſerving to be uniformly avoided, ought in many caſes to be ſought, that there may be as little waſte of time or exertion on either ſide, as the nature of the ſituation will admit.

To proceed from the manner in which engagements are made, to the obligation that reſults from them. This obligation is of different degrees according to the nature of the caſe: but it is impoſſible to deny that it may be of the moſt ſerious import. We have already ſeen that each man is entitled to his ſphere of diſcretion, which another may not, unleſs under the moſt imperious circumſtances, infringe *. But I infringe it as ſubſtantially, by leading him into a certain ſpecies of conduct through the means of deluſive expectations, as by any ſyſtem of uſurpation it is poſſible to employ. A perſon promiſes me, I will ſuppoſe, five hundred pounds for a certain commodity, a book it may be, which I am to manufacture. I am obliged to ſpend ſeveral months in the production. Surely, after this, he can rarely be juſtified in diſappointing me, and ſaying, I have found a better object upon which to employ my money. The caſe is nearly ſimilar to that of the labourer who, after having performed his days work, ſhould be refuſed his wages. Take the caſe the other way, and ſuppoſe that, I having contracted to produce the commodity, the other party to the contract has advanced me three out of the five hundred pounds. Suppoſe farther, that I am unable to replace him. Surely I am not at liberty

* *Book* II, *Chap.* V.

to diſpenſe myſelf from the performance of my engagement.

The caſe here is of the ſame nature as of any other ſpecies of property. Property is ſacred: there is but one way in which duty requires the poſſeſſor to diſpoſe of it; but I may not forcibly interfere, and diſpoſe of it in that beſt way in his ſtead. This is the ordinary law of property, as derived from the principles of univerſal morality *. But there are caſes that ſuperſede this law. The principle that attributes to every man the diſpoſal of his property, as well as that diſtributes to every man his ſphere of diſcretion, derives its force in both inſtances from the conſideration that a greater ſum of happineſs will reſult from its obſervance than its infringement. Wherever therefore the contrary to this is clearly the caſe, there the force of the principle is ſuſpended. What ſhall prevent me from taking by force from my neighbour's ſtore, if the alternative be that I muſt otherwiſe periſh with hunger? What ſhall prevent me from ſupplying the diſtreſs of my neighbour, from property that ſtrictly ſpeaking is not my own, if the emergence be terrible, and will not admit of delay? Nothing; unleſs it be the puniſhment that is reſerved for ſuch conduct in ſome inſtances; ſince it is no more fitting that I ſhould bring upon myſelf calamity and death, than that I ſhould ſuffer them to fall upon another.

The veſting of property in any individual admits of different degrees of fulneſs, and in proportion to that fulneſs will be the miſchief reſulting from its violation. If then it appear that, even when the veſting amounts to the fulneſs of regular poſſeſſion, there are caſes in which it ought to be violated, the different degrees that fall ſhort of this will admit of ſtill greater modification. It is in vain that the whole multitude of moraliſts aſſures us, that the ſum I owe to another man is as little to be infringed as the wealth of which he is in

* *Book* VIII.

poſſeſſion. Every man feels the fallacy of this maxim. The ſum I owe to another, may in many caſes be paid at my pleaſure, either to-day or to-morrow, either this week or next. The means of payment, particularly with a man of ſlender reſources, muſt neceſſarily be fluctuating, and he muſt employ his diſcretion as to the proportion between his neceſſary and his gratuitous diſburſements. When he ultimately fails of payment, the miſchief he produces is real, but is not ſo great, at leaſt in ordinary caſes, as that which attends upon robbery. In fine, it is a law reſulting from the neceſſity of nature, that he who has any ſpecies of property in truſt, for however ſhort a time, muſt have ſome diſcretion, ſometimes leſs and ſometimes greater, as to the diſpoſal of it.

To return once more to the main principle in this gradation. The property, moſt completely ſanctioned by all the general rules that can be deviſed, is yet not inviolable. The imperious principle of ſelf-preſervation may authoriſe me to violate it. A great and eminent balance of good to the public may authoriſe its violation; and upon this ground we ſee proprietors occaſionally compelled to part with their poſſeſſions, under every mode of government in the world. As a general maxim it may be admitted, that force is a legitimate means of prevention, where the alternative is complete, and the employment of force will not produce a greater evil, or ſubvert the general tranquillity. But, if direct force be in certain caſes juſtifiable, indirect force, or the employment of the means placed in my hands without an anxious enquiry reſpecting the ſubordinate regulations of property, where the benefit to be produced is clear, is ſtill more juſtifiable. Upon this ground it may be my duty to relieve upon ſome occaſions the wretchedneſs of my neighbour, without having firſt balanced the debtor and creditor ſide of my accounts, or when I know that balance to be againſt me. Upon this ground every promiſe is conſidered as given under a reſerve for unforeſeen and imperious

circumſtances, whether that reſerve be ſpecifically ſtated or no. Upon the ſame ground an appointment for an interview is conſidered as ſubject to a ſimilar reſerve; though the time of my neighbour, which I diſſipate upon that ſuppoſition, is as real a property as his wealth, is a part of that ſphere over which every man is entitled to the exerciſe of his ſeparate diſcretion. It is impoſſible that human ſociety can ſubſiſt without frequent incroachments of one man upon his neighbour: we ſufficiently diſcharge our duty, if we habitually recollect that each man has his province, and endeavour to regulate our conduct accordingly.

Theſe principles are calculated to ſet in a clearer light than they have often been exhibited, the caſes that authoriſe the violation of promiſes. Compact is not the foundation of morality; on the contrary, it is an expedient to which we are ſometimes obliged to have reſort, but the introduction of which muſt always be regarded by an enlightened obſerver with jealouſy. It ought never to be called forth but in caſes of the cleareſt neceſſity. It is not the principle upon which our common happineſs repoſes; it is only one of the means for ſecuring that happineſs. The adherence to promiſes therefore, as well as their employment in the firſt inſtance, muſt be decided by the general criterion, and maintained only ſo far as upon a comprehenſive view it ſhall be found productive of a balance of happineſs.

There is farther an important diſtinction to be made between a promiſe given without an intention to perform it, and a promiſe which information afterwards acquired perſuades me to violate. The firſt can ſcarcely in any inſtance take place, without fixing a ſtain upon the promiſer, and exhibiting him to ſay the leaſt, as a man greatly deficient in delicacy of moral diſcrimination. The caſe of the ſecond is incomparably different. Every engagement into which

I have entered, an adherence to which I shall afterwards find to be a material obstacle to my utility (suppose an engagement not to write any thing in derogation of the thirty-nine articles), ought to be violated: nor can there be any limitation upon this maxim, except where the violation will greatly incroach upon the province and jurisdiction of my neighbour.

Let us apply these remarks upon the nature of promises to the doctrine of a social contract. It is not through the medium of any supposed promise or engagement that we are induced to believe that the conduct of our neighbour will not be ridiculously inconsistent or wantonly malicious. If he protest in the most solemn way against being concluded by any such promise, at the same time that he conducts himself in a rational and sober manner, he will not find us less disposed to confide in him. We depend as readily upon a foreigner, that he will not break the laws, and expose himself to their penalties (for this has been supposed to be one of the principal branches of the social contract), as we do upon our countrymen. If we do not depend equally upon the Arabs who inhabit the plains of Asia, it is not because we impute to them a deficiency in their social contract, but because we are ignorant of their principles of conduct, or know that those principles do not afford us a sufficient security as to the particulars of our intercourse with them. Tell a man what will be the solid and substantial effects of his proceeding, how it will affect his neighbours, and what influence it will have upon his own happiness, and you speak to the unalienable feelings of the human mind. But tell him that, putting these things for the present out of our consideration, it is sufficient that he has promised a certain conduct, or that, if he have not expressly promised it, he has promised it by implication, or that, if he have not promised it, his ancestors a few generations back promised it for him; and you speak

of a motive that ſcarcely finds a ſympathetic chord in one human breaſt, and that few will ſo much as underſtand.

Few things can be more abſurd than to talk of our having promiſed obedience to the laws. If the laws depend upon promiſes for their execution, why are they accompanied with ſanctions? Why is it conſidered as the great arcanum of legiſlation to make laws that are eaſy of execution, and that need no aſſiſtance from the execrable intervention of oaths and informers? Again, why ſhould I promiſe that I will do every thing that a certain power called the government ſhall imagine it convenient or decide that it is fitting for me to do? Is there in this either morality, or juſtice or common ſenſe? Does brute force alone communicate to its poſſeſſor a ſufficient claim upon my veneration? For, be it obſerved, the wiſdom or duty of obedience proceeds upon exactly the ſame principle, whether it be to a tyrant, or to the moſt regularly elected houſe of repreſentatives. There is but one power to which I can yield a heart-felt obedience, the deciſion of my own underſtanding, the dictate of my own conſcience. The decrees of any other power, eſpecially if I have a firm and independent mind, I ſhall obey with reluctance and averſion. My obedience is purely an affair of compoſition: I chooſe to do that which in itſelf conſidered my judgment diſapproves, rather than incur the greater evil which the power from whom the mandate iſſues, annexes to my diſobedience *.

There is another principle concerned in this ſubject, and that is ſincerity: I may not evade the laws of the ſociety by any diſhonourable ſubterfuge or contemptible duplicity. But the obligation of ſincerity, like all the other great principles of morality, is not founded in promiſes, but in the indefeaſible benefits annexed to its obſervance. Add to which, the ſin-

* *Chap.* VI.

cerity I am bound to practiſe towards the magiſtrate, particularly in a caſe where his requiſition ſhall be unjuſt, is not different in its principle, and is certainly of no higher obligation, than the ſincerity I am bound to practiſe towards a private individual.

Let us however ſuppoſe that the aſſertion of an implied contract in every community is true, or let us take the caſe where an actual engagement has been entered into by the members of the ſociety. This appears from what has been already delivered to be of that claſs of promiſes which are of ſlighteſt obligation. In the notion of a ſocial contract little is made over, little expectation is excited, and therefore little miſchief is included in its breach. What we moſt expect and require in a member of the ſame community is the qualities of a man, and the conduct that ought to be obſerved indifferently by a native or a ſtranger. Where a promiſe or an oath is impoſed upon me ſuperfluouſly, as is always the caſe with promiſes of allegiance, or where I am compelled to make it by the operation of a penalty, the treatment I ſuffer is atrociouſly unjuſt, and of conſequence the breach of ſuch a promiſe is peculiarly ſuſceptible of apology. A promiſe of allegiance is a declaration that I approve the exiſting conſtitution of things, and, ſo far as it is binding, an engagement that I will continue to ſupport that conſtitution. But I ſhall ſupport it for as long a time and in as great a degree as I approve of it, without needing the intervention of a promiſe. It will be my duty not to undertake its deſtruction by precipitate and unpromiſing means, for a much more cogent reaſon than can be deduced from any promiſe I have made. An engagement for any thing farther than this is both immoral and abſurd: it is an engagement to a non-entity, a conſtitution; a promiſe that I will abſtain from doing that which I believe to be beneficial to my fellow citizens.

CHAP. IV.

OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY.

Common deliberation the true foundation of government—proved from the equal claims of mankind—from the nature of our faculties—from the object of government—from the effects of common deliberation.—Delegation vindicated.—Difference between the doctrine here maintained and that of a ſocial contract.—Remark.—Concluſion.

HAVING rejected the hypotheſes that have moſt generally been advanced as to the rational baſis of a political authority, let us enquire whether we may not arrive at the ſame object, by a ſimple inveſtigation of the obvious reaſon of the caſe, without refinement of ſyſtem or fiction of proceſs.

Government then being firſt ſuppoſed neceſſary for the welfare of mankind, the moſt important principle that can be imagined relative to its form and ſtructure, ſeems to be this; that as government is a tranſaction in the name and for the benefit of the whole, every member of the community ought to have ſome ſhare in the ſelection of its meaſures. The arguments in ſupport of this propoſition are various.

Firſt, it has already appeared that there is no ſatisfactory criterion marking out any man or ſet of men to preſide over the reſt.

Secondly, all men are partakers of the common faculty, reaſon; and may be ſuppoſed to have ſome communication with the common preceptor, truth. It would be wrong in an affair of ſuch momentous concern, that any chance for additional wiſdom ſhould be rejected; nor can we tell, in many caſes, till after the experiment, how eminent any individual may ultimately be found in the buſineſs of guiding and deliberating for his fellows.

Thirdly, government is a contrivance instituted for the security of individuals; and it seems both reasonable that each man should have a share in providing for his own security, and probable that partiality and cabal will by this means be most effectually excluded.

Lastly, to give each man a voice in the public concerns comes nearest to that fundamental purpose of which we should never lose sight, the uncontroled exercise of private judgment. Each man will thus be inspired with a consciousness of his own importance, and the slavish feelings that shrink up the soul in the presence of an imagined superior, will be unknown.

Admitting then the propriety of each man having a share in directing the affairs of the whole in the first instance, it seems necessary that he should concur in electing a house of representatives, if he be the member of a large state; or, even in a small one, that he should assist in the appointment of officers and administrators *; which implies, first, a delegation of authority to these officers, and, secondly, a tacit consent, or rather an admission of the necessity, that the questions to be debated should abide the decision of a majority.

But to this system of delegation the same objections may be urged, that were cited from Rousseau under the head of a social contract. It may be alleged that, "if it be the business of every man to exercise his own judgment, he can in no instance surrender this function into the hands of another."

To this objection it may be answered, first, that the parallel is by no means complete, between an individual's exercise of his judgment in a case that is

* *We shall be led in a subsequent branch of this enquiry to investigate how far either of these measures are inseparable from the maintenance of social order.* Book V. *Chap.* XXIV.

truly his own, and his exercise of his judgment in an article where the province of a government is already admitted. If there be something contrary to the simplest ideas of justice in such a delegation, this is an evil inseparable from political government. The true and only adequate apology of government is necessity; the office of common deliberation is solely, to supply the most eligible means of meeting that necessity.

Secondly, the delegation we are here considering, is not, as the word in its most obvious sense may seem to imply, the act of one man committing to another, a function which strictly speaking it became him to exercise for himself. Delegation, in every instance in which it can be reconciled with justice, proposes for its object the general good. The individuals to whom the delegation is made, are either more likely from talents or leisure to perform the function in the most eligible manner, or there is at least some public interest requiring that it should be performed by one or a few persons, rather than by every individual for himself. This is the case, whether in that first and simplest of all political delegations the prerogative of a majority, or in the election of a house of representatives, or in the appointment of public officers. Now all contest, as to the person who shall exercise a certain function and the propriety of resigning it, is frivolous, the moment it is decided how and by whom it can most advantageously be exercised. It is of no consequence that I am the parent of a child, when it has once been ascertained that the child will live with greater benefit under the superintendence of a stranger.

Lastly, it is a mistake to imagine that the propriety of restraining me, when my conduct is injurious, rises out of any delegation of mine. The justice of employing force upon certain emergencies, was at least equally cogent before the existence of society *. Force ought never to be resorted to but in cases of absolute

* *Chap* I. *p.* 155.

neceſſity; and, when ſuch caſes occur, it is the duty of every man to defend himſelf from violation. There is therefore no delegation neceſſary on the part of the offender; but the community, in the cenſure it exerciſes over him puts itſelf in the place of the injured party.

It may perhaps be imagined by ſome perſons, that the doctrine here delivered of the juſtice of proceeding in common concerns by a common deliberation, is nearly coincident with that which affirms a lawful government to derive its authority from a ſocial contract. Let us conſider what is the true difference between them; and this ſeems principally to lie in the following particular.

The grand peculiarity of the ſyſtem of a ſocial contract, conſiſts in the notion of this contract, as "a criterion, determining by its own ſupremacy, what actions are right, and what are wrong, what it is that ſhould be countenanced, and what ſhould be repreſſed." But this is by no means a juſt ſtate of the caſe. We have found the parallel to be in one reſpect incomplete between the exerciſe of theſe two functions, private judgment and ſocial deliberation. In another the analogy is ſtriking, and light will be derived upon our ideas of the latter by an illuſtration borrowed from the former. In both caſes there is an obvious principle of juſtice in favour of the general exerciſe. But, though the general exerciſe be ſanctioned by the plaineſt principles of juſtice, juſtice will by no means vindicate every particular application of either. Private judgment and public deliberation are not the ſtandard of right and wrong? they are only the means of diſcovering theſe, and of comparing particular modes of proceedingwith the demands and benefit of our common nature.

Too much ſtreſs has undoubtedly been laid upon the idea, as of a grand and magnificent ſpectacle, of a nation deciding for itſelf upon ſome great public principle, and of the higheſt magiſtracy yielding its

claims when the general voice has pronounced. The value of the whole muſt at laſt depend upon the quality of their deciſion. Truth cannot be made more true by the number of its votaries. Nor is the ſpectacle much leſs intereſting, of a ſolitary individual, bearing his undaunted teſtimony in favour of juſtice, though oppoſed by miſguided millions. Within certain limits however the beauty of the exhibition may be acknowledged. That a nation ſhould exerciſe undiminiſhed its function of common deliberation, is a ſtep gained, and a ſtep that inevitably leads to an improvement of the character of individuals. That men ſhould agree in the aſſertion of truth, is no unpleaſing evidence of their virtue. Laſtly, that an individual, however great may be his imaginary elevation, ſhould be obliged to yield his perſonal pretenſions to the ſenſe of the community, at leaſt bears the appearance of a practical confirmation of the great principle, that all private conſiderations muſt yield to the general good.

We will conclude this chapter with a brief ſtatement of the reſult of the arguments which have been advanced upon the ſubject of government. The only ſufficient reaſon that can be offered for the inſtitution of government is a fatal and indiſpenſable neceſſity. A juſt government cannot be founded in force; for force has no affinity with juſtice. It cannot be founded in the will of God; for we have no revelation of that will in behalf of one form of government rather than another; and a juſt being, ſuch as God is ſuppoſed to be, cannot prohibit us from ſupplying our wants and remedying our imperfections. It cannot be founded in contract; for men, when they digeſt the articles of a contract, are not empowered to create rights, but only to declare what was previouſly right. Laſtly, it cannot be founded in the rights of man. The only genuine rights of man are negative; our active exertions, if legitimate, are not rights, but duties. Government originates in the errors of man;

it finds our rights invaded, and ſubſtitutes an invaſion leſs miſchievous in the room of one that is more ſo. Its ſufficient reaſon is neceſſity; and that preliminary firſt aſcertained, its object (the diminiſhing the quantity of uſurpation) as well as the general intereſt, requires, that its adminiſtration ſhall be, as much as poſſible, guided and modified by the ſenſe of every member of the community.

CHAP. V.

OF LEGISLATION.

Society can declare and interpret, but cannot enact.— Its authority only executive.

HAVING thus far inveſtigated the nature of political functions, it ſeems neceſſary that ſome explanation ſhould be given upon the ſubject of legiſlation. "Who is it that has authority to make laws? What are the characteriſtics of that man or body of men, in whom the tremendous faculty is veſted, of preſcribing to the reſt of the community what they are to perform and what to avoid?"

The anſwer to theſe queſtions is exceedingly ſimple: Legiſlation, as it has been uſually underſtood, is not an affair of human competence. Immutable reaſon is the true legiſlator, and her decrees it behoves us to inveſtigate. The functions of ſociety extend, not to the making, but the interpreting of law; it cannot decree, it can only declare that, which the nature of things has already decreed, and the propriety of which irreſiſtibly flows from the circumſtances of the caſe.

Monteſquieu ſays, that "in a free ſtate every man will be his own legiſlator *." This is not true, in

* "*Dans un état libre, tout homme qui eſt cenſé avoir une ame libre, doit être gouverné par lui-même.*" *Eſprit des Loix, Liv.* XI. *Ch.* vi.

matters the most purely individual, unless in the limited sense already explained. It is the office of conscience to determine, "not like an Asiatic cadi, according to the ebbs and flows of his own passions, but like a British judge who makes no new law, but faithfully declares that law which he finds already written *." The same distinction is to be made upon the subject of political authority. All government is strictly speaking executive. It has appeared to be necessary, with respect to men as we at present find them, that force should sometimes be employed in repressing injustice; and for the same reasons we will suppose this force should as far as possible be vested in the community. To the public support of justice therefore the authority of the community extends. But no sooner does it wander in the smallest degree from the line of justice, than its proper authority is at an end; it may be submitted to from necessity; but its existence, as to the matter in question, is an uncompensated evil.

CHAP. VI.

OF OBEDIENCE.

Rational obedience not founded in contract.—Kinds of obedience.—Compulsory obedience often less injurous than confidence.—Kinds of authority.—Limitations of confidence.—Reverence to superiors considered.—Government founded in ignorance.

THE two great questions upon which the theory of government depends, are: Upon what foundation can political authority with the greatest propriety rest? and, What are the considerations which bind us to political obedience? Having entered at

* *Sterne's Sermons.*—"*On a Good Conscience.*"

length into the firſt of theſe queſtions, it is time that we ſhould proceed to the examination of the ſecond.

One of the moſt popular theories relative to the foundation of political authority we have ſeen to be that of an original contract, affirming that the criterion of political juſtice is to be found in the conventions and rules which have been adjuſted by the community at large. In purſuance of this original principle, the ſame theoriſts have neceſſarily gone on and affirmed, that the true ground of political obedience was to be found in the ſame ſource, and that, in obeying a government regularly conſtituted, we did nothing more than perform our engagements.

The reaſonings in ſupport of this hypotheſis are obvious. "Suppoſe a number of perſons living in any neighbourhood ſhould perceive that great common benefit would accrue from building a bridge, ſinking a canal or making a highway. The ſimpleſt mode for them to adopt in this caſe is, to conſult together, and raiſe the money neceſſary for effecting this deſirable purpoſe, by each man aſſeſſing himſelf according to his ability, and contributing his quota to a common fund. Now it is plain that in this caſe each pays his aſſeſſment (ſuppoſing the payment to be voluntary) in conſideration of the previous agreement; his contribution would be of no avail, however deſirable was the object to be effected, had he not reaſon to depend upon the reſt of the neighbourhood that they would pay theirs. But government," ſay the advocates of an original contract, "when regularly conſtituted, is preciſely ſuch a proviſion as the one here ſtated for building a bridge or making a road: it is a conſultation and ſettlement among the different members of a community as to the regulations moſt conducive to the benefit of the whole. It is upon this principle that taxes are paid, and that the force of the community is drawn out in ſuch proportions as are neceſſary to repreſs the external or internal diſturbers

of its tranquillity. The ground therefore upon which each man contributes his ſhare of effort or property, is, that he may perform his contract, and diſcharge that for which he has engaged as a member of the community."

The refutation of this hypotheſis has been anticipated in the preceding chapters.—Government can with no propriety be compared to the conſtruction of a bridge or a canal, a matter of mere convenience and refinement. It is ſuppoſed to be of the moſt irreſiſtible neceſſity; it is indiſputably an affair of hardſhip and reſtraint. It conſtitutes other men the arbitrators of my actions, and the ultimate diſpoſers of my deſtiny.—Almoſt every member of every community that has exiſted on the face of the earth might reaſonably ſay, "I know of no ſuch contract as you deſcribe; I never entered into any ſuch engagement; I never promiſed to obey; it muſt therefore be an iniquitous impoſition to call upon me to do ſomething under pretence of a promiſe I never made."—The reaſon a man lives under any particular goverment is partly neceſſity; he cannot eaſily avoid living under ſome government, and it is often ſcarcely in his power to abandon the country in which he was born: it is alſo partly a choice of evils; no man can be ſaid in this caſe to enjoy that freedom which is eſſential to the forming a contract, unleſs it could be ſhown that he had a power ſomewhere of inſtituting a government adapted to his own conceptions.—Government in reality, as has abundantly appeared, is a queſtion of force, and not of conſent. It is deſirable, that a government ſhould be made as agreeable as poſſible to the ideas and inclinations of its ſubjects; and that they ſhould be conſulted, as extenſively as may be, reſpecting its conſtruction and regulations. But at laſt the beſt conſtituted government that can be formed, particularly for a large community, will contain many proviſions that, far from having obtained the conſent of all its members, encounter even in their outſet a ſtrenuous,

though ineffectual, opposition.—From the whole of these reasonings it appears, that, in those measures which have the concurrence of my judgment, I may reasonably be expected to co-operate with willingness and zeal; but for the rest my only justifiable ground of obedience is, that I will not disturb the repose of the community, or that I do not perceive the question to be of sufficient magnitude to authorise me in incurring the penalty.

To understand the subject of obedience with sufficient accuracy it is necessary that we should attend to the various shades of meaning of which the word is susceptible.

Every voluntary action is an act of obedience; in performing it we comply with some view, and are guided by some incitement or motive.

The purest kind of obedience is where an action flows from the independent conviction of our private judgment, where we are directed, not by the precarious and mutable interference of another, but by a recollection of the intrinsic and indefeasible tendency of the action to be performed *. In this case the object of obedience is the dictate of the understanding: the action may or may not be such as my neighbours or the community will approve, but this approbation does not constitute its direct motive.

The kind of obedience which stands next to this in its degree of voluntariness, arises in the following manner. Every man is capable of comparing himself with his fellow. Every man will find that there are some points in which he is the equal or perhaps the superior of other men, but that there are certainly some points in which other men are superior to him. The superiority in question in the present instance, is superiority of intellect or information. It may happen that the point in which another man surpasses me, is a point of some importance to my welfare or convenience.

* *Book* II, *Chap.* VI.

I want for example to build a houſe, or to ſink a well. It may happen that I have not leiſure or means to acquire the ſcience neceſſary for this purpoſe. Upon that ſuppoſition I am not to be blamed, if I employ a builder for the firſt, or a mechanic for the ſecond; nor ſhall I be liable to blame, if I work in perſon under his direction. This ſort of obedience is diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of confidence and to juſtify in a moral view the repoſing of confidence, the only thing neceſſary is that it ſhould be fitter and more beneficial, all things conſidered, that the function to be performed ſhould be performed by another perſon, than that it ſhould be performed by me.

The third and laſt kind of obedience neceſſary to be adverted to upon the preſent occaſion, is where I do that which is not preſcribed to me by my private judgment, merely on acconnt of the miſchievous conſequences that I foreſee will be annexed to my omiſſion by the arbitrary interference of ſome voluntary being.

The moſt important obſervation that ariſes upon the ſtatement of this ſcale of obedience, is that obedience in the ſecond degree ought to be guarded with as much jealouſy, and kept by the perſon yielding obedience within as narrow limits, as poſſible. The laſt ſort of obedience will frequently be neceſſary. Voluntary beings conſtitute a large portion of the univerſe; we ſhall often have occaſion to foreſee their arbitrary determinations and conduct, nor can knowledge, as ſuch, in any inſtance fail to be a deſirable acquiſition; our conduct therefore muſt and ought to be modified by their interferences. Morality, as has already been frequently obſerved, conſiſts entirely in an eſtimate of conſequences; he is the truly virtuous man who produces the greateſt portion of benefit his ſituation will admit. The moſt exalted morality indeed, that in which the heart repoſes with the moſt unmingled ſatisfaction, relates to the inherent and indefeaſible ten-

dencies of actions. But we shall be by no means excusable, if we overlook in our system of conduct the arbitrary awards of other men. Nothing can be more certain than that an action, suppose of inferior moment or utility, which for its own sake might be right to be performed, it may become my duty to neglect, if I know that by performing it I shall incur the penalty of death.

The mischiefs attendant on the frequent recurrence of this species of obedience, and the grounds upon which its interference is to be guarded against as extensively as circumstances will admit, have already been stated *. Yet obedience flowing from the consideration of a penalty, is less a source of degradation and depravity, than a habit of obedience founded in confidence. The man who yields it, may reserve in its most essential sense his independence. He may be informed in judgment and resolved in purpose as to every moral and social obligation. He may suffer his understanding neither to be seduced nor confounded; he may observe in its fullest extent the mistake and prepossession of his neighbour, to which he thus finds it necessary to accommodate himself. It seems possible, that he who thus pities the folly while he complies with the necessity, may still, even under this discipline, grow in discrimination and sagacity.

The greatest mischief that can arise in the progress of obedience is where it shall lead us in any degree to depart from the independence of our understanding, a departure which general and unlimited confidence necessarily includes. In this view the best advice that could be given to a person in a state of subjection is, "Comply, where the necessity of the case demands it; but criticise while you comply. Obey the unjust mandates of your governors; for this prudence and a consideration of the common safety may require; but treat them with no false lenity, regard them with no indul-

* *Book* II, *Chap.* VI.

gence. Obey; this may be right; but beware of reverence. Reverence nothing but wiſdom and ſkill; government may be veſted in the fitteſt perſons; then they are entitled to reverence, becauſe they are wiſe, and not becauſe they are governors: and it may be veſted in the worſt. Obedience will occaſionally be right in both caſes: you may run ſouth, to avoid a wild beaſt advancing in that direction, though you want to go north. But be upon your guard againſt confounding things ſo totally unconnected with each other as a purely political obedience, and reſpect. Government is nothing but regulated force; force is its appropriate claim upon your attention. It is the buſineſs of individuals to perſuade; the tendency of concentrated ſtrength, is only to give conſiſtency and permanence to an influence more compendious than perſuaſion."

All this will be made ſomewhat clearer, if we reflect on the proper correlative of obedience, authority: and here let us recur to the three ſorts of obedience above ſpecified.

The firſt kind of authority then is the authority of reaſon, what is really ſuch, or is only conceived to be ſuch. The terms, both authority and obedience, are leſs frequently employed in this ſenſe than in either of the following.

The ſecond ſpecies of authority is that which depends for its validity upon the confidence of him with whom it prevails, and is where, not having myſelf acquired ſuch information as to enable me to form a peremptory judgment, I yield a greater or leſs degree of deference to the known opinion an deciſion of another. This ſeems to be the ſtricteſt and moſt preciſe meaning of the word authority, as obedience in its moſt refined ſenſe denotes that compliance which is the offspring of reſpect.

Authority in the laſt of the three ſenſes alluded to, is where a man in iſſuing his precept does not deliver that which may be neglected with impunity; but his

requiſition is attended with a ſanction, and the violation of it will be followed with a penalty. This is the ſpecies of authority which properly annexes to the idea of government. It is a violation of political juſtice to confound the authority which depends upon force, with the authority which ariſes from reverence and eſteem; the modification of my conduct which might be due in the caſe of a wild beaſt, with the modification which is due to ſuperior wiſdom. Theſe two kinds of authority may happen to veſt in the ſame perſon; but they are altogether diſtinct and independent of each other.

The conſequence which has flowed from confounding them has been a greater debaſement of the human character than could eaſily have followed upon direct and unqualified ſlavery. The principle of confidence and the limitations with which it ought to be attended, are capable of an eaſy and convincing explication. I am bound, to the fulleſt extent that is conſiſtent with my opportunities and ſituation, to exerciſe my underſtanding. Man is the ornament of the univerſe, only in proportion as he conſults his judgment. Whatever I ſubmit to from the irreſiſtible impulſe of neceſſity, is not mine, and debaſes me only as it tends gradually to ſhackle the intrepidity of my character. With reſpect to ſome men therefore it may be innoxious. But, where I make the voluntary ſurrender of my underſtanding, and commit my conſcience to another man's keeping, the conſequence is clear. I then become the moſt miſchievous and pernicious of animals. I annihilate my individuality as a man, and diſpoſe of my force as an animal to him among my neighbours who ſhall happen to excel in impoſture and artifice, and to be leaſt under reſtraint from the ſcruples of integrity and juſtice. I put an end, as to my own ſhare, to that happy colliſion of underſtandings upon which the hopes of human improvement depend. I can have no genuine fortitude, for fortitude is the off-

ſpring of conviction. I can have no conſcious integrity, for I do not underſtand my own principles, and have never brought them to the teſt of examination. I am the ready tool of injuſtice, cruelty and profligacy; and, if at any time I am not employed in their purpoſes, it is the refult of accident, not of my own precaution and honeſty.

The underſtanding muſt firſt be conſulted, and then, no doubt, confidence will come in for its ſhare of juriſdiction. The conſiderations, which will have influence in the mind of an impartial enquirer to inforce, or communicate uncertainty to, his opinions, are numerous. Among theſe, he will not refuſe attention to the ſtate of opinion in the preſent or any preceding generation of men. In the mean time it will rarely happen, that the authority of other men's judgment in caſes of general enquiry, will be of great weight. Either men of equal talents and integrity have embraced both ſides, or their prejudice and deficiency as to the materials of judging have been ſuch as extremely to weaken their teſtimony. Add to this, that the only ground of opinion, ſtrictly ſo called, is the intrinſic evidence of the opinion itſelf; upon that our judgment muſt be formed; and the deciſion of others can have no effect but that of increaſing or diminiſhing our doubt of the rectitude of our own perceptions. The direct province of confidence is to ſupply, in the beſt way the caſe will admit, the defect of our knowledge; but it can never, ſtrictly ſpeaking, furniſh knowledge itſelf. Its proper uſe belongs rather to the circumſtance of individual actions, than to matters of ſpeculation and principle. Thus, I ought not perhaps to refuſe weight to the adviſe of ſome men, even when the reaſons by which they inforce their adviſe are conceived by me to be problematical: and thus I am bound, as before ſtated, to truſt another, in the moment of emergency, in the art he has ſtudied, rather than myſelf by whom that ſtudy was never undertaken. Except when the nature of my ſituation

calls upon me to act, I shall do more wisely in refraining from any decision, in questions where I am not qualified to decide from information that is properly my own.

One of the lessons most assiduously repeated upon mankind in all ages and countries, is that of reverence to our superiors. If by this maxim be intended our superiors in wisdom, it may be admitted, but with some qualification. But, if it imply our superiors in station only, nothing can be more contrary to reason and justice. Is it not enough that they have usurped certain advantages over us to which they can show no equitable claim; and must we also humble our courage and renounce our independence in their presence? Why reverence a man because he happens to be born to certain privileges; or because a concurrence of circumstances (for wisdom, as we have already seen, gives a claim to respect utterly distinct from power) has procured him a share in the legislative or executive government of our country? Let him content himself with the obedience which is the result of force; for to that only is he entitled.

Reverence to our superiors in wisdom is to be admitted, but with considerable limitations. I am bound, as has already appeared, to repose certain functions, such as that of building my house, or educating my child, in the hands of him by whom those functions will most properly be discharged. It may be right that I should act under the person to whom I have thus given my suffrage, in cases where I have reason to be persuaded of his skill, and cannot be expected to acquire the necessary skill myself. But in those cases of general justice which are equally within the province of every human understanding, I am a deserter from the requisitions of duty, if I do not assiduously exert my faculties, or if I be found to act contrary to the conclusions they would dictate, from deference to the opinions of another.—The reverence we are here considering is a reverence prompting us to

ſome kind of obedience; there is another kind, terminating in eſteem only, that, ſo far from deſerving to be confined within theſe ſtrict limitations, we are bound not to withhold from any man who is the poſſeſſor of eſtimable qualities.

The reverence which is due from a child to his parent, or rather to his ſenior in age and experience, falls under the ſame rules as have already been delivered. Wherever I have good reaſon to believe that another perſon knows better than myſelf what is proper to be done, there I ought to conform to his direction. But the advantage which he poſſeſſes muſt be obvious, otherwiſe I ſhall not be juſtified in my proceeding. If I take into the account every chance for advantage, I ſhall never act upon the reſult of my own reflections. The mind of one man is eſſentially diſtinct from the mind of another. If each do not preſerve his individuality, the judgment of all will be feeble, and the progreſs of our common underſtanding inexpreſſibly retarded. Hence it follows that the deference of a child becomes vicious, whenever he has reaſon to doubt that the parent poſſeſſes eſſential information of which he is deprived. Nothing can be more neceſſary for the general benefit than that we ſhould diveſt ourſelves, as ſoon as the proper period arrives, of the ſhackles of infancy; that human life ſhould not be one eternal childhood; but that men ſhould judge for themſelves, undebilitated by the prejudices of education, or the inſtitutions of their country.

To a government therefore, that talked to us of deference to political authority, and honour to be rendered to our ſuperiors, our anſwer ſhould be: "It is yours to ſhackle the body and reſtrain our external actions; that is a reſtraint we underſtand. Announce your penalties; and we will make our election of ſubmiſſion or ſuffering. But do not ſeek to enſlave our minds. Exhibit your force in its plaineſt form, for that is your province; but ſeek not to inveigle and

miſlead us. Obedience and external ſubmiſſion is all you can be entitled to claim; you can have no right to extort our deference, and command us not to ſee and diſapprove of your errors." In the mean time it ſhould be obſerved that it is by no means a neceſſary conſequence that we ſhould diſapprove of all the meaſures of government; but there muſt be diſapprobation wherever there is a queſtion of ſtrict political obedience.

A corollary which flows from theſe principles is deſerving of our attention. Confidence is in all caſes the offspring of ignorance. It muſt therefore continually decline, 'in relation,' as was above ſtated, 'to thoſe caſes of general juſtice which are equally within the province of every human underſtanding*,' in proportion as wiſdom and virtue ſhall increaſe. But the queſtions that belong to the department of government, are queſtions of general juſtice. The conduct of an enlightened and virtuous man cannot be in harmony with the regulations of government, except ſo far as thoſe regulations are accidentally coincident with his private judgment, or as he acts with prudent and judicious ſubmiſſion to the neceſſity of the caſe. He will not act from confidence; for he has himſelf examined, as it was his duty to do, the merits of the action: and he has not failed to detect the impoſture that would perſuade us there is a myſtery in government, which uninitiated mortals muſt not preſume to penetrate. Now it is ſufficiently known that the empire of government is built in opinion †; nor is it enough for this purpoſe that we refuſe to contribute to overturn it by violence, the opinion muſt go to the extent of prompting us to actual ſupport. No government can ſubſiſt in a nation, the individuals of which ſhall merely abſtain from tumultuous reſiſtance, while in their genuine ſentiments they cenſure and

* *P.* 196

† *Book* I, *Chap.* VI, *p.* 92; *Book* II, *Chap.* III, *p.* 126.

deſpiſe its inſtitution. In other words, government cannot proceed but upon confidence, as confidence on the other hand cannot exiſt without ignorance. The true ſupporters of government are the weak and uninformed, and not the wiſe. In proportion as weakneſs and ignorance ſhall diminiſh, the baſis of government will alſo decay. This however is an event which ought not to be contemplated with alarm. A cataſtrophe of this deſcription would be the true euthanaſia of government. If the annihilation of blind confidence and implicit opinion can at any time be effected, there will neceſſarily ſucceed in their place an unforced concurrence of all in promoting the general welfare. But, whatever may be the event in this reſpect and the future hiſtory of political ſocieties *, we ſhall do well to remember this characteriſtic of government, and apply it as the univerſal touchſtone of the inſtitution itſelf. As in the commencement of the preſent Book we found government indebted for its exiſtence to the errors and perverſeneſs of a few, ſo it now appears that it can no otherwiſe be perpetuated than by the infantine and uninſtructed confidence of the many. It may be to a certain degree doubtful whether the human ſpecies will ever be emancipated from their preſent ſubjection and pupillage, but let it not be forgotten that this is their condition. The recollection will be ſalutary to individuals, and may ultimately be found productive of benefit to all.

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* *Book* V, *Chap.* XXII, XXIV.

CHAP. VII.

OF FORMS OF GOVERNMENT.

Uniformity of the nature of man.—Different degrees in which he poſſeſſes information.—Imperfect ſchemes of ſociety eſtimated.—Mode in which improvements are to be realiſed.—Inference.

THERE is one other topic relative to general principles of government, which it ſeems fitting and uſeful to examine in this place. "Is there a ſcheme of political inſtitution, which, as coming neareſt to perfection, ought to be preſcribed to all nations; or, on the other hand, are different forms of government beſt adapted to the condition of different nations, each worthy to be commended in its peculiar place, but none proper to be tranſplanted to another ſoil?"

The latter part of this alternative is the creed which has ordinarily prevailed; but it is attended with obvious objections.

If one form of government makes one nation happy, why ſhould it not equally contribute to the felicity of another?

The points in which human beings reſemble are infinitely more conſiderable than thoſe in which they differ. We have the ſame ſenſes; and the impreſſions on thoſe ſenſes which afflict me, may ordinarily be expected to be ſources of anguiſh to you. It is true that men differ in their habits and taſtes. But theſe are accidental varieties. There is but one perfection to man; one thing moſt honourable; one thing that to a well organiſed and healthful mind will produce the moſt exquiſite pleaſure. All elſe is deviation and error; a diſeaſe, to be cured, not to be encouraged. Senſual pleaſure on the one hand or intellectual on the other is, abſolutely ſpeaking, the higheſt and moſt

desirable. We are not to make too much account of the perversions of taste. Men long inured to slavery, for example, undoubtedly have a less exquisite sense of its hatefulness; perhaps instances may be found where it is borne without a murmur. But this is by no means a proof that it is the fit and genuine state of the beings who suffer it. To such men we ought to say, "You are satisfied with an oblivion of all that is eminent in man; but we will awake you. You are contented with ignorance; but we will enlighten you. You are not brutes: you are not stones. You sleep away existence in a miserable neglect of your most valuable privileges: but you are capable of exquisite delights; you are formed to glow with benevolence, to expatiate in the fields of knowledge, to thrill with disinterested transport, to enlarge your thoughts so as to take in the wonders of the material universe, and the principles that bound and ascertain the general happiness."

If then it appears that the means which are beneficial to one man, ought in the most important instances to be deemed most desirable for others, the same principle which applies to all other sources of moral influence, will also apply to government. Every political system must have a certain influence upon the moral state of the nation among whom it exists. Some are more favourable, or less inimical to the general interest than others. That form of society, which is most conducive to improvement, to the exalted and permanent pleasure of man, the sound politician would wish to see universally realised.

Such is the true theory of this subject, taken in its most absolute form; but there are circumstances that qualify the universality of these principles.

The best gift that can be communicated to man is valuable only so far as it is esteemed. It is in vain that you heap upon me benefits that I neither understand nor desire. The faculty of understanding is an essential part of every human being, and cannot with im-

punity be overlooked in any attempt to alter or meliorate his condition. Government in particular is founded in opinion; nor can any attempt to govern men otherwise than in conformity to their own conceptions, be expected to prove salutary. A project therefore to introduce abruptly any species of political institution, merely from a view to its absolute excellence, and without taking into account the state of the public mind, must be absurd and injurious. The best mode of political society will no doubt be considered by the enlightened friend of his species, as the ultimate object of his speculations and efforts. But he will be on his guard against precipitate measures. The only mode for its secure and auspicious establishment is through the medium of a general preference in its favour.

The consequence which flows from this view of the subject is in a certain degree favourable to the ideas which were stated in the beginning of the chapter as constituting the more general and prevailing opinion.

'Different forms of government are best adapted to the condition of different nations.' Yet there is one form, in itself considered, better than any other form. Every other mode of society, except that which conduces to the best and most pleasurable state of the human species, is at most no more than an object of toleration. It must of necessity be ill in various respects; it must entail mischiefs; it must foster unsocial and immoral prejudices. Yet, upon the whole it may be, like some excrescences and defects in the human frame, it cannot immediately be removed without introducing something worse. In the machine of human society all the wheels must move together. He that should violently attempt to raise any one part into a condition more exalted than the rest, or force it to start away from its fellows, would be the enemy, and not the benefactor, of his contemporaries.

It follows however from the principles already

detailed that the intereſts, of the human ſpecies require a gradual, but uninterrupted change. He who ſhould make theſe principles the regulators of his conduct, would not raſhly inſiſt upon the inſtant abolition of all exiſting abuſes. But he would not nouriſh them with falſe praiſe. He would ſhow no indulgence to their enormities. He would tell all the truth he could diſcover in relation to the genuine intereſts of mankind. Truth, delivered in a ſpirit of univerſal kindneſs, with no narrow reſentments or angry invective, can ſcarcely be dangerous, or fail, ſo far as relates to its own operation, to communicate a ſimilar ſpirit to the hearer. Truth, however unreſerved be the mode of its enunciation, will be ſufficiently gradual in its progreſs. It will be fully comprehended only by ſlow degrees by its moſt aſſiduous votaries; and the degrees will be ſtill more temperate by which it will pervade ſo conſiderable a portion of the community, as to render them mature for a change of their common inſtitutions.

Again: if conviction of the underſtanding be the compaſs which is to direct our proceedings in the general affairs, we ſhall have many reforms, but no revolutions *. As it is only in a gradual manner that the public can be inſtructed, a violent exploſion in the community is by no means the moſt likely to happen as the reſult of inſtruction. Revolutions are the produce of paſſion, not of ſober and tranquil reaſon. There muſt be an obſtinate reſiſtance to improvement on the one ſide, to engender a furious determination of realiſing a ſyſtem at a ſtroke on the other. The reformers muſt have ſuffered from inceſſant counteraction, till, inflamed by the treachery and art of their opponents, they are wrought up to the deſperate ſtate of imagining that all muſt be ſecured in the firſt favourable criſis, as the only alternative for its being ever ſecured. It would ſeem therefore that the de-

* *Book* IV, *Chap* II.

mand of the effectual ally of the public happiness upon those who enjoy the privileges of the state, would be, "Do not give us too soon; do not give us too much; but act under the incessant influence of a disposition to give us something."

Government, under whatever point of view we examine this topic, is unfortunately pregnant with motives to censure and complaint. Incessant change, everlasting innovation, seems to be dictated by the true interests of mankind. But government is the perpetual enemy of change. What was admirably observed of a particular system of government*, is in a great degree true of all: They "lay their hand on the spring there is in society, and put a stop to its motion." Their tendency is to perpetuate abuse. Whatever was once thought right and useful, they undertake to entail to the latest posterity. They reverse the genuine propensities of man, and, instead of suffering us to proceed, teach us to look backward for perfection. They prompt us to seek the public welfare, not in alteration and improvement, but in a timid reverence for the decisions of our ancestors, as if it were the nature of the human mind always to degenerate, and never to advance.

Man is in a state of perpetual mutation. He must grow either better or worse, either correct his habits or confirm them. The government under which we are placed, must either increase our passions and prejudices by fanning the flame, or by gradually discouraging tend to extirpate them. In reality, it is impossible to conceive a government that shall have the latter tendency. By its very nature positive institution has a tendency to suspend the elasticity and progress of mind. Every scheme for embodying imperfection must be injurious. That which is to-day a considerable melioration, will at some future period, if preserved unaltered, appear a defect and

* *The Spartan: Logan's Philosophy of History, p.* 69.

diſeaſe in the body politic. It is earneſtly to be deſired, that each man ſhould be wiſe enough to govern himſelf without the intervention of any compulſory reſtraint; and, ſince government even in its beſt ſtate is an evil, the object principally to be aimed at is, that we ſhould have as little of it as the general peace of human ſociety will permit.

AN

ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

POLITICAL JUSTICE.

BOOK IV.

OF THE OPERATION OF OPINION IN SOCIETIES AND INDIVIDUALS.

CHAP. I.

OF RESISTANCE.

Subject of the fourth book.—First branch of the subject.—Question of resistance stated.—Resistance of a nation.—Ambiguity of the term nation.—Case of a military subjection considered.—Resistance of a majority—of a minority.—Farther ambiguity of the term nation.—Nature of liberty.—Remark.—Resistance of the individual.

HAVING now made some progress in the enquiry originally instituted, it may be proper to look back, and consider the point at which we are arrived. We have examined, in the first place, the powers of man as they relate to the subject of which we treat;

secondly, we have delineated the principles of society, as founded in justice and general interest, independently of and antecedent to every species of political government; and, lastly, have endeavoured to ascertain the fundamental conditions which must belong to the most rational system of government. We might now proceed to investigate the different objects of government, and deduce the inferences respecting them which are pointed out to us by the preceding reasonings. But there are various miscellaneous considerations which, though they have not fallen under the former heads, are of considerable importance to our disquisition, and may usefully occupy the remainder of the present volume. They are of different classes, and in a certain degree detached from each other; but may perhaps without impropriety be ranged under two branches: the mode in which the speculative opinions of individuals are to be rendered effectual for the melioration of society; and the mode in which opinion is found to operate in modifying the conduct of individuals.

The strong hold of government has appeared hitherto to have consisted in seduction. However imperfect might be the political constitution under which they lived, mankind have ordinarily been persuaded to regard it with a sort of reverential and implicit respect. The privileges of Englishmen and the liberties of Germany, the splendour of the most Christian, and the solemn gravity of the Catholic king, have each afforded a subject of exultation to the individuals, who shared, or thought they shared, in the advantages these terms were conceived to describe. Each man was accustomed to deem it a mark of the peculiar kindness of providence, that he was born in the country, whatever it was, to which he happened to belong. The time may come which shall subvert these prejudices. The time may come, when men shall exercise the piercing search of truth upon the mysteries of government, and view without prepossession

the defects and abuses of the constitution of their country. Out of this new order of things a new series of duties will arise. When a spirit of impartiality shall prevail, and loyalty shall decay, it will become us to enquire into the conduct which such a state of thinking shall make necessary. We shall then be called upon to maintain a true medium between blindness to injustice and calamity on the one hand, and an acrimonious spirit of violence and resentment on the other. It will be the duty of such as shall see these subjects in the pure light of truth, to exert themselves for the effectual demolition of monopolies and usurpation; but effectual demolition is not the offspring of crude projects and precipitate measures. He who dedicates himself to these, may be suspected to be under the domination of passion, rather than benevolence. The true friend of equality will do nothing unthinkingly, will cherish no wild schemes of uproar and confusion, and will endeavour to discover the mode in which his faculties may be laid out to the greatest and most permanent advantage.

The whole of this question is intimately connected with the enquiry which has necessarily occupied a share in the disquisitions of all writers on the subject of government, concerning the propriety and measures of resistance. "Are the worst government and the best equally entitled to the toleration and forbearance of their subjects? Is there no case of political oppression, that will authorise the persons who suffer it, to take up arms against their oppressors? Or, if there be, what is the quantity of oppression, at the measure of which insurrections begin to be justifiable? Abuses will always exist, for man will always be imperfect; what is the nature of the abuse, which it would be pusillanimous to oppose by words only, and which true courage would instruct us was to be endured no longer?"

No question can be conceived more important than this. In the examination of it philosophy almost forgets its nature; it ceases to be speculation, and becomes

an actor. Upon the decision, according as it shall be decided in the minds of a bold and resolute party, the existence of thousands may be suspended. The speculative enquirer, if he live in a state where abuse is notorious and grievances frequent, knows not, while he weighs the case in the balance of reason, how far that which he attempts to describe, is already realised in the apprehension of numbers of his countrymen. Let us enter upon the question with the seriousness which so critical an enquiry demands.

Resistance may have its source in the emergencies either of the public or the individual. "A nation," it has commonly been said, "has a right to shake off any authority that is usurped over it." This is a proposition that has generally passed without question, and certainly no proposition can appear more plausible. But, if we examine it minutely, we shall find that it is attended with equivocal circumstances. What do we mean by a nation? Is the whole people concerned in this resistance, or only a part? If the whole be prepared to resist, the whole is persuaded of the injustice of the usurpation. What sort of usurpation is that which can be exercised by one or a few persons over a whole nation universally disapproving of it? Government is founded in opinion*. Bad government deceives us first, before it fastens itself upon us like an incubus, oppressing all our efforts. A nation in general must have learned to respect a king and a house of lords, before a king and a house of lords can exercise any authority over them. If a man or set of men, unsanctioned by any previous prejudice in their favour, pretend to exercise sovereignty in a country, they will become objects of derision rather than of serious resistance. Destroy the existing prejudice in favor of any of our present institutions, and they will fall into similar disuse and contempt.

* *Book* I. *Chap.* vi, *p.* 92; *Book* II, *Chap.* III, *p.* 126.

It has sometimes been supposed, "that an army, foreign or domestic, may be sufficient to hold a people in subjection completely against their own inclination." A domestic army at least, will in some degree partake of the opinions and sentiments of the people at large. The more precautions are employed to prevent the infection, the doctrine will probably spread with so much the more certainty and rapidity. Show me that you are afraid of my entertaining certain opinions or hearing certain principles, and you will infallibly sooner or later awaken my curiosity. A domestic army will always be found a very doubtful instrument of tyranny in a period of crisis.—A foreign army after a time will become domesticated. If the question be of importing a foreign army for the specific purpose of supporting tottering abuse, great alarm will inevitably be excited. These men, it may be, are adapted for continuing the reign of tyranny; but who will pay them? A weak, supperstitious or ignorant people may be held in the chains of foreign power, but the school of moral and political independence sends forth pupils of a very different character. In the encounter with their penetration and discernment tyranny will feel itself powerless and transitory. In a word, either the people are unenlightened and unprepared for a state of freedom, and then the struggle and the consequences of the struggle will be truly perilous; or the progress of political knowledge among them is decisive, and then every one will see how futile and short-lived will be the attempt to hold them in subjection by means of garrisons and a foreign force. The party attached to liberty is, upon that supposition, the numerous one; they are the persons of true energy and who have an object worthy of their zeal. Their oppressors, few in number, and degraded to the rank of lifeless machines, wander with no certain destination or prospect over the vast surface, and are objects of pity rather than serious alarm. Every hour dimi-

miſhes their number and their reſources; while on the other hand every moment's delay gives new ſtrength to the cauſe, and fortitude to the champions of liberty. Men would not be inclined pertinaciouſly to object to a ſhort delay, if they recollected the advantages and the certainty of ſucceſs with which it is pregnant.—Meanwhile theſe reaſonings turn upon the probability that the purpoſes of liberty will be full as effectually anſwered without the introduction of force: there can be no doubt of the juſtifiableneſs of a whole nation having recourſe to arms, if a caſe can be made out in which it ſhall be impoſſible for them to ſhut out the introduction of ſlavery in any other way.

The ſame reaſonings with little variation will apply to the caſe of an unqueſtionable majority of a nation, as to that of the whole. The majority of a nation is irreſiſtible; it as little needs to have recourſe to violence; there is as little reaſon to expect that any uſurper will be ſo mad as to contend with it. If ever it appear to be otherwiſe, it is becauſe in one of two ways we deceive ourſelves with the term majority. Firſt, nothing is more obvious, than the danger incident to a man of a ſanguine temper of over-eſtimating the ſtrength of his party. He aſſociates perhaps only with perſons of his own way of thinking, and a very ſmall number appears to him as if it were the whole world. Aſk perſons of different tempers and habits of life, how many republicans there are at this hour in England or Scotland, and you will immediately be ſtruck with the very oppoſite anſwers you will receive. There are many errors of a ſanguine temper that appear at firſt ſight innocent or even uſeful: but ſurely every man of integrity and conſcience will heſitate, before he ſuffers the poſſibility, that an error of this ſort ſhould encourage him to plunge a nation in violence and open a ſea of blood. He muſt have a heart of ſtrange compoſition, who, for

the precarious inferences he draws in moral or political calculation, would volunteer a mandate of death, or be the firſt to unſheath the ſword of ſummary execution.

A ſecond deception that lurks under the word majority, lies, not in the queſtion of number, but of quality and degree of illumination. A majority, we ſay perhaps, are diſſatisfied with the preſent ſtate of things, and wiſh for ſuch a ſpecific alteration. Alas, it is to be feared that the greater part of this majority are often mere parrots, who have been taught a leſſon, of the ſubject of which they underſtand little or nothing. What is it they diſlike? A ſpecific tax perhaps, or ſome temporary grievance. Do they diſlike the vice and meanneſs that grow out of tyranny, and pant for the liberal and ingenious virtue that would be foſtered in their own minds in a different condition? No. They are very angry, and fancy themſelves very judicious. What is it they deſire? They know not. It would probably be eaſy to ſhow that what they profeſs to deſire, is little better than what they hate. What they hate is not the general depravation of the human character, and what they deſire is not its improvement. It is an inſult upon human underſtanding, when we ſpeak of perſons in this ſtate of infantine ignorance, to ſay that the majority of the nation are on the ſide of political renovation. Few greater misfortunes can befal any country than for ſuch perſons to be inſtigated to ſubvert exiſting inſtitutions, and violently to take the work of political reformation into their own hands.

There is an obvious remedy to each of the deceptions here enumerated: Time. Is it doubtful whether the reformers be a real majority of the inhabitants of any country? Is it doubtful whether the majority truly underſtand the object of their profeſſed wiſhes, and therefore whether they be ripe for its reception, and competent to its aſſertion?

Wait but a little while, and the doubt will probably be ſolved, in the manner that the warmeſt friend of human happineſs and improvement would deſire. If the ſyſtem of independence and equality be the truth, it may be expected hourly to gain converts. The more it is diſcuſſed, the more will it be underſtood, and its value cheriſhed and felt. If the ſtate of the majority be doubtful, a very few years, perhaps a ſhorter time therefore, will tend to place it beyond the reach of controverſy. The great cauſe of humanity which is now pleading in the face of the univerſe has but two enemies; thoſe friends of antiquity and thoſe friends of innovation, who, impatient of ſuſpenſe, are inclined violently to interrupt the calm, the inceſſant, the rapid and auſpicious progreſs, which thought and reflexion appear to be making in the world. Happy would it be for mankind, if thoſe perſons who intereſt themſelves moſt zealouſly in theſe great queſtions, would confine their exertions, to the diffuſing in every poſſible mode a ſpirit of enquiry, and the embracing every opportunity of increaſing the ſtock and generaliſing and communication of political knowledge!

A third ſituation which may be conceived to exiſt in a country where political reform has been made a topic of conſiderable attention, is that, where neither the whole nor the majority of the nation is deſirous of the reform in queſtion, but where the innovators are an unqueſtionable minority. In this caſe nothing can be more indefenſible, than a project for introducing by violence that ſtate of ſociety which our judgments may happen to approve. In the firſt place, no perſons are ripe for the participation of a benefit, the advantage of which they do not underſtand. No people are competent to enjoy a ſtate of freedom, who are not already imbued with a love of freedom. The moſt dreadful tragedies will infallibly reſult, from an attempt to goad mankind prematurely into a poſition, however abſtractedly excellent, for which they are in-

no degree prepared. Secondly, to endeavour to impose our sentiments by force is the most detestable species of persecution. Others are as much entitled to deem themselves in the right as we are. The most sacred of all privileges is that by which each man has a certain sphere relative to the government of his own actions and the exercise of his discretion, not liable to be trenched upon by the intemperate zeal or dictatorial temper of his neighbour *. To dragoon men into the adoption of what we think right, is an intolerable tyranny. It leads to unlimited disorder and injustice. Every man thinks himself in the right; and, if such a proceeding were universally introduced, the destiny of mankind would be no longer a question of argument, but of strength, presumption or intrigue.

There is a farther ambiguity in the term nation as employed in the position above stated, "that a nation has a right forcibly to shake off any authority that is usurped over it." A nation is an arbitrary term. Which is most properly termed a nation; the Russian empire or the canton of Berne? Or, is every thing a nation upon which accident shall bestow that appellation? It seems most accurate to say that any number of persons who are able to establish and maintain a system of mutual regulation for themselves conformable to their own opinions, without imposing a system of regulation upon a considerable number of others inconsistent with the opinion of these others, have a right, or, more properly speaking, a duty obliging them, to adopt that measure. That any man or body of men should impose their sense upon persons of a different opinion, is, absolutely speaking, wrong, and in all cases deeply to be regretted: but this evil it is perhaps in some degree necessary to incur for the sake of a preponderating good. All government includes in it this evil as one of its fundamental characteristics.

* *Book* II. *Chap.* V, VI.

There is one circumſtance of much importance to be attended to in this diſquiſition. Superficial thinkers lay great ſtreſs upon the external ſituation of men, and little upon their internal ſentiments. Perſevering enquiry will probably lead to a mode of thinking the reverſe of this. To be free is a circumſtance of little value, if we could ſuppoſe men in a ſtate of external freedom without the magnanimity, energy and firmneſs that conſtitute almoſt all that is valuable in a ſtate of freedom. On the other hand, if a man have theſe qualities, there is little left for him to deſire. He cannot be degraded; he cannot readily become either uſeleſs or unhappy. He ſmiles at the impotence of deſpotiſm; he fills up his exiſtence with ſerene enjoyment and induſtrious benevolence. Civil liberty is chiefly deſirable as a means to procure and perpetuate this temper of mind. They therefore begin at the wrong end, who make haſte to overturn and confound the uſurped powers of the world. Make men wiſe, and by that very operation you make them free. Civil liberty follows as a conſequence of this; no uſurped power can ſtand againſt the artillery of opinion. Every thing then is in order, and ſucceeds at its appointed time. How unfortunate is it that men are ſo eager to ſtrike, and have ſo little conſtancy to reaſon!

It is probable that this queſtion of reſiſtance would never have admitted of ſo long a controverſy, if the advocates of the ſyſtem of liberty promulgated in the laſt century had not, unobſerved to themſelves, introduced a confuſion into the queſtion. Reſiſtance may be employed either to repel the injuries committed againſt the nation generally, or ſuch as in their immediate application relate to the individual. To the firſt of theſe the preceding reaſonings principally apply. The injuries to a nation depend for their nature for the moſt part upon their permanency, and therefore admit of the utmoſt ſobriety and deliberation as to the mode in which they

are to be remedied. Individuals may be injured or deſtroyed by a ſpecific act of tyranny, but nations cannot; the principal miſchief to the nation lies in the preſage contained in the ſingle act, of the injuſtice that is to continue to be exerciſed. Reſiſtance, by the very meaning of the term as it is uſed in political enquiry, ſignifies a ſpecies of conduct that is to be adopted in relation to an eſtabliſhed authority: but an old grievance ſeems obviouſly to lead as its counterpart to a gardual and temperate remedy.

The conſideration which by being confounded with this has ſerved to miſlead certain enquirers, is that of what is commonly known by the name of ſelf-defence, or more properly the duty obliging each individual to repel, as far as lies in his power, any violent attack made either upon himſelf or another. This, by the terms of the queſtion, is a circumſtance that does not admit of delay; the benefit of the remedy entirely depends upon the time of the application. The principle in this caſe is of eaſy development. Force is an expedient the uſe of which is much to be deplored. It is contrary to the nature of intellect, which cannot be improved but by conviction and perſuaſion. It corrupts the man that employs it, and the man upon whom it is employed. But it ſeems that there are certain caſes ſo urgent, as to oblige us to have recourſe to this injurious expedient: in other words, there are caſes where the miſchief to accrue from not violently counteracting the perverſeneſs of the individual, is greater than the miſchief which the violence neceſſarily draws along with it. Hence it appears that the ground juſtifying reſiſtance, in every caſe where it can be juſtified, is that of the good likely to reſult from ſuch interference, being greater than the good to reſult from omitting it.

There are probably caſes where, as in a murdur for example about to be committed on a uſeful and valuable member of ſociety, the chance of preventing it

by any other means than inſtantaneous reſiſtance is ſo ſmall, as by no means to vindicate us in incurring the danger of ſo miſchievous a cataſtrophe. But will this juſtify us in the caſe of an individual oppreſſed by the authority of a community? Let us ſuppoſe that there is a country in which ſome of its beſt citizens are ſelected as objects of vengeance by an alarmed and jealous tyranny. It cannot reaſonably be doubted that every man, a condemned felon or murderer, is to be commended for quietly withdrawing himſelf from the execution of the law; much more ſuch perſons as have now been deſcribed. But ought thoſe well-affected citizens that are ſtill at large to riſe in behalf of their brethren under perſecution? Every man that is diſpoſed to enter into ſuch a project, and who is anxious about the moral rectitude of his conduct, muſt reſt its juſtification upon one of the two grounds above ſtated: either the immediate purpoſe of his riſing is the melioration of public inſtitutions, or it is to be eſtimated with reference to the meritoriouſneſs of the individuals in queſtion. The firſt of theſe has been ſufficiently diſcuſſed; we will ſuppoſe therefore that he confines himſelf to the laſt. Here, as has been already obſerved, the whole, as a moral queſtion, will turn upon the comparative benefit or miſchief to reſult from the reſiſtance to be employed. The diſparity is great indeed between the reſiſtance ordinarily ſuggeſted by the term ſelf-defence, and the reſiſtance which muſt expect to encounter in its progreſs the civil power of the country. In the firſt, the queſtion is of a moment; if you ſucceed in the inſtant of your exertion, you may expect the applauſe, rather than the proſecution of executive authority. But in the latter, the end will ſcarcely be accompliſhed but by the overthrow of the government itſelf. Let the lives of the individuals in ſuppoſition be as valuable as you pleaſe, that value will neceſſarily be ſwallowed up in the greater queſtions that occur in the ſequel. Thoſe queſtions therefore are the proper topics of attention; and we ſhall be to blame, if we ſuffer

ourſelves to be led unawares into a conduct the direct tendency of which is the production of one ſort of event, while all we intended was the production of another. The value of individuals ought not to be forgotten; there are men whoſe ſafety ſhould be cheriſhed by us with anxious attention; but it is difficult to imagine a caſe in which, for their ſake, the lives of thouſands and the fate of millions ſhould be committed to riſk.

CHAP. II.

OF REVOLUTIONS.

Duty of a citizen as to the conſtitution of his country.—No ſcheme of government perfect or final.—Revolutionary meaſures, during their operation, inimical to independence—and intellectual enquiry.—Period of their operation.—Revolutions accompanied with blood—crude and premature in their effects—uncertain in point of ſucceſs.—Conviction of the underſtanding an adequate means of demoliſhing political abuſe.—The progreſs of conviction not tardy and feeble—not precarious.—Revolutions in ſome caſes to be looked for.

THE queſtion of reſiſtance is cloſely connected with that of revolutions. It may be proper therefore before we diſmiſs this part of the ſubject, to enter into ſome diſquiſition reſpecting the nature and effects of that ſpecies of event which is commonly known by this appellation, and the ſentiments which a good citizen ſhould entertain concerning it.

And here one of the firſt obſervations that offers itſelf is, that it is not unworthy of a good member of ſociety to be an enemy to the conſtitution of his country.

In contradiction to this propoſition it has been ſaid, "that we live under the protection of this con-

ſtitution; and protection, being a benefit conferred, obliges us to a reciprocation of ſupport in return."

To this it may be anſwered, firſt, that the benefit of this protection is ſomewhat equivocal. If the government we live under preſerve us from anarchy on the one ſide, it equally prevents us from adopting a more rational ſyſtem of policy on the other. Till it can be ſhown that the vices, from the effects of which the conſtitution protects us, are not in a great meaſure the growth of its own imperfections, we ſhall never ſufficiently underſtand the quantity of benefit it includes.

Secondly, gratitude, in the ſenſe in which it is here ſpoken of, has already been proved not to be a virtue, but a vice. Every man and collection of men ought to be treated by us in a manner founded upon their intrinſic qualities and capacities and not according to a rule which has exiſtence only in relation to ourſelves *.

Add to this, thirdly, that no motive can be more equivocal than the gratitude here recommended. Gratitude to the conſtitution, an abſtract idea, an imaginary exiſtence, is altogether unintelligible. Affection to my countrymen will be much better proved, by my exertions to procure them a ſubſtantial benefit, than by my ſupporting a ſyſtem which I believe to be fraught with injurious conſequences.

A demand of the nature which is here controverted, is ſimilar to the demand upon me to be a Chriſtian becauſe I am an Engliſhman, or a Mahometan becauſe I am a native of Turkey. Inſtead of being an expreſſion of reſpect, it argues contempt of all religion and government, and every thing ſacred among men. If government be an inſtitution conducive to the public welfare, it deſerves my attention and inveſtigation. I am bound, in proportion as I deſire the happineſs of others, to conſider it with all the accuracy my circum-

* *Book* II, *Ch.* II.

ſtances will allow, and employ my talents and every honeſt influence I am able to exert, to render it ſuch as juſtice and reaſon may require.

This general view of the duties of a citizen in relation to the government under which he lives being premiſed, we may now proceed with advantage to the particular points, which are calculated to influence our judgment, as to the conduct we ought to hold with reſpect to revolutions.

There is one extenſive view upon the ſubject of revolutions, which will be of great conſequence in determining the ſentiments and conduct we ought to maintain reſpecting them. The wiſe man is ſatisfied with nothing. It is ſcarcely poſſible there ſhould be any inſtitution in which impartial diſquiſition will not find defects. The wiſe man is not ſatisfied with his own attainments, or even with his principles and opinions. He is continually detecting errors in them; he ſuſpects more; there is no end to his reviſals and enquiries. Government is in its nature an expedient, a recourſe to ſomething ill to prevent an impending miſchief; it affords therefore no ground of complete ſatisfaction. Finite things muſt be perpetually capable of increaſe and advancement; it would argue therefore extreme folly to reſt in any given ſtate of improvement, and imagine we had attained our ſummit. The true politician confines neither his expectations nor deſires within any ſpecific limits; he has undertaken a labour without end. He does not ſay, "Let me attain thus much, and I will be contented; I will demand no more; I will no longer counteract the exiſting order of things; I will ſet thoſe who ſupport them at reſt from farther importunity." On the contrary the whole period of his exiſtence is devoted to the promotion of innovation and reform.

The direct inference from theſe ſentiment ſeems to be unfavorable to revolutions. The politician who aims at a limited object, and has ſhut up his views within that object, may be forgiven, if he

manifeſt ſome impatience for its attainment. But this paſſion cannot be felt in an equal degree by him, who aims at improvement not upon a definite, but an indefinite ſcale. This man knows that, when he has carried any particular point, his taſk is far from complete. He knows that, when government has been advanced one degree higher in excellence, abuſes will ſtill be ſufficiently numerous. Many will be oppreſſed; many will be expoſed to unjuſt condemnation; diſcontent will have its empire and its votaries; and the reign of inequality will be extenſive. He can mark therefore the progreſs of melioration with calmneſs; though it will have all the wiſhes of his heart, and all the exertions of his underſtanding. That progreſs, which may be carried on through a longer time and a greater variety of articles than his foreſight can delineate, he may be expected to deſire ſhould take place in a mild and gradual, though inceſſant advance, not by violent leaps, not by concuſſions which may expoſe millions to riſk, and ſweep generations of men from the ſtage of exiſtence.

And here let us briefly conſider what is the nature of revolution. Revolution is engendered by an indignation againſt tyranny, yet is itſelf evermore pregnant with tyranny. The tyranny which excites its indignation can ſcarcely be without its partiſans; and, the greater is the indignation excited, and the more ſudden and vaſt the fall of the oppreſſors, the deeper will be the reſentment which fills the mind of the loſing party. What more unavoidable, than that men ſhould entertain ſome diſcontent at being violently ſtripped of their wealth and their privileges? What more venial, than that they ſhould feel ſome attachment to the ſentiments in which they were educated, and which, it may be, but a little before, were the ſentiments of almoſt every individual in the community? Are they obliged to change their creed preciſely at the time at which I ſee reaſon to alter

mine? They have but remained at the point at which we both ſtood a few years ago. Yet this is the crime which a revolution watches with the greateſt jealouſy, and puniſhes with the utmoſt ſeverity. The crime which is thus marked with the deepeſt reprobation, is not the reſult of relaxation of principle, of profligate living, or bitter and inexorable hatred. It is a fault, not the leaſt likely to occur in a man of untainted honour, of an upright diſpoſition, and dignified and generous ſentiments.

Revolution is inſtigated by a horror againſt tyranny, yet its own tyranny is not without peculiar aggravations. There is no period more at war with the exiſtence of liberty. The unreſtrained communication of opinions has always been ſubjected to miſchievous counteraction, but upon ſuch occaſions it is trebly fettered. At other times men are not ſo much alarmed for its effects. But in a moment of revolution, when every thing is in criſis, the influence even of a word is dreaded, and the conſequent ſlavery is complete. Where was there a revolution in which a ſtrong vindication of what it was intended to aboliſh was permitted, or indeed almoſt any ſpecies of writing or argument that was not for the moſt part in harmony with the opinions which happened to prevail? An attempt to ſcrutiniſe men's thoughts and puniſh their opinions is of all kinds of deſpotiſm the moſt odious; yet this attempt is peculiarly characteriſtic of a period of revolution.

The advocates of revolution uſually remark, "that there is no way to rid ourſelves of our oppreſſors, and prevent new ones from ſtarting up in their room, but by inflicting on them ſome ſevere and memorable retribution." Upon this ſtatement it is particularly to be obſerved, that there will be oppreſſors, as long as there are individuals inclined, either from perverſeneſs, or rooted and obſtinate prejudice, to take party with the oppreſſor. We have therefore to terrify, not only the man of crooked

ambition, but all thoſe who would ſupport him, either from a corrupt motive, or a well-intended error. Thus, we propoſe to make men free; and the method we adopt, is to influence them more rigorouſly than ever by the fear of puniſhment. We ſay that government has uſurped too much, and we organiſe a government tenfold more encroaching in its principles and terrible in its proceedings. Is ſlavery the beſt project that can be deviſed for making men free? Is a diſplay of terror the readieſt mode for rendering them fearleſs, independent and enterpriſing?

During a period of revolution, enquiry and all thoſe patient ſpeculations to which mankind are indebted for their greateſt improvements, are ſuſpended. Such ſpeculations demand a period of ſecurity and permanence; they can ſcarcely be purſued, when men cannot foreſee what ſhall happen to-morrow and the moſt aſtoniſhing viciſſitudes are affairs of perpetual recurrence. Such ſpeculations demand leiſure and a tranquil and diſpaſſionate temper; they can ſcarcely be purſued, when all the paſſions of man are afloat, and we are hourly under the ſtrongeſt impreſſions of fear and hope, apprehenſion and deſire, dejection and triumph. Add to this what has been already ſtated, reſpecting the tendency of revolution to reſtrain the declaration of our thoughts and put fetters upon the licence of inveſtigation.

Another circumſtance proper to be mentioned, is the inevitable duration of the revolutionary ſpirit. This may be illuſtrated from the change of government in England in 1688. If we look at the revolution ſtrictly, ſo called, we are apt to congratulate ourſelves that the advantages it procured, to whatever they may amount, were purchaſed by a cheap and bloodleſs victory. But, if we would make a ſolid eſtimate, we muſt recollect it as the procuring cauſe of two general wars, of nine years under king William, and twelve under queen Anne; and two inteſtine rebellions (events worthy of execration, if we

call to mind the gallant ſpirit and generous fidelity of the Jacobites, and their miſerable end) in 1715 and 1745. Yet this was upon the whole a mild and auſpicious revolution. Revolutions are a ſtruggle, between two parties each perſuaded of the juſtice of its cauſe, a ſtruggle not decided by compromiſe or patient expoſtulation, but by force only. Such a deciſion can ſcarcely be expected to put an end to the mutual animoſity and variance.

Perhaps no important revolution was ever bloodleſs. It may be uſeful in this place to recollect in what the miſchief of ſhedding blood conſiſts. The abuſes which at preſent exiſt in all political ſocieties are ſo enormous, the oppreſſions which are exerciſed ſo intolerable, the ignorance and vice they entail ſo dreadful, that poſſibly a diſpaſſionate enquirer might decide that, if their annihilation could be purchaſed by an inſtant ſweeping of every human being now arrived at years of maturity from the face of the earth, the purchaſe would not be too dear. It is not becauſe human life is of ſo conſiderable value, that we ought to recoil from the ſhedding of blood. Alas! the men that now exiſt, are for the moſt part poor and ſcanty in their portion of enjoyment, and their dignity is no more than a name. Death is in itſelf among the ſlighteſt of human evils. An earthquake, which ſhould ſwallow up a hundred thouſand individuals at once, would chiefly be to be regretted for the anguiſh it entailed upon ſurvivors; in a fair eſtimate of thoſe it deſtroyed, it would often be comparatively a trivial event. The laws of nature which produce it, are a fit ſubject of inveſtigation; but their effects, contraſted with many other events, are ſcarcely a topic of regret. The caſe is altogether different when man falls by the hand of his neighbour. Here a thouſand ill paſſions are generated. The perpetrators and the witneſſes of murders become obdurate, unrelenting and inhuman. Thoſe who ſuſtain the loſs of relations or friends by

a cataſtrophe of this ſort, are filled with indignation and revenge. Diſtruſt is propagated from man to man, and the deareſt ties of human ſociety are diſſolved. It is impoſſible to deviſe a temper more inauſpicious to the cultivation of juſtice, and the diffuſion of benevolence.

To the remark that revolutions can ſcarcely be unaccompanied with the ſhedding of blood, it may be added that they are neceſſarily crude and premature. Politics is a ſcience. The general features of the nature of man are capable of being underſtood, and a mode may be delineated which, in itſelf conſidered, is beſt adapted to the condition of man in ſociety. If this mode ought not every where and inſtantly to be ſought to be reduced into practice, the modifications that are to be given it in conformity to the variation of circumſtances, and the degrees in which it is to be realiſed, are alſo a topic of ſcientifical diſquiſition. Now it is clearly the nature of ſcience to be progreſſive in its advances. How various were the ſtages of aſtronomy, before it received the degree of perfection which was given it by Newton? How imperfect were the liſpings of intellectual ſcience, before it attained the preciſion of the preſent century*? Political knowledge is, no doubt, in its infancy; and, as it is an affair of life and action, will, in proportion as it gathers vigour, manifeſt a more uniform and leſs precarious influence upon the concerns of human ſociety. It is the hiſtory of all ſcience to be known firſt to a few, before it deſcends through the various deſcriptions and claſſes of the community. Thus for twenty years the Principia of Newton had ſcarcely any readers, and his ſyſtem continued unknown; the next twenty perhaps ſufficed to make the outlines of that ſyſtem familiar to almoſt every perſon in the ſlighteſt degree tinctured with ſcience.

*In Hume, Hartley, Rouſſeau and Helvetius.

The only method according to which ſocial improvements can be carried on with ſufficient proſpect of an auſpicious event, is when the improvement of our inſtitutions advances in a juſt proportion to the illumination of the public underſtanding. There is a condition of political ſociety beſt adapted to every different ſtage of individual improvement. The more nearly this condition is ſucceſſively realiſed, the more advantageouſly will the general intereſt be conſulted. There is a ſort of proviſion in the nature of the human mind for this ſpecies of progreſs. Imperfect inſtitutions, as has already been ſhown, cannot long ſupport themſelves, when they are generally diſapproved of, and their effects truly underſtood. There is a period at which they may be expected to decline and expire almoſt without an effort. Reform, under this meaning of the term, can ſcarcely be conſidered as of the nature of action. Men feel ther ſituation; and the reſtraints that ſhackled them before, vaniſh like a deception. When ſuch a criſis has arrived, not a ſword will need to be drawn, not a finger to be lifted up in purpoſes of violence. The adverſaries will be too few and too feeble, to be able to entertain a ſerious thought of reſiſtance againſt the univerſal ſenſe of mankind.

Under this view of the ſubject then it appears that revolutions, inſtead of being truly beneficial to mankind, anſwer no other purpoſe than that of marring the ſalutary and uninterrupted progreſs which might be expected to attend upon political truth and ſocial improvement. They diſturb the harmony of intellectual nature. They propoſe to give us ſomething for which we are not prepared, and which we cannot effectually uſe. They ſuſpend the wholſome advancement of ſcience, and confound the proceſs of nature and reaſon.

We have hitherto argued upon the ſuppoſition that the attempt which ſhall be made to effect a revolution, ſhall be crowned with ſucceſs. But this

fuppofition muft by no means be fuffered to pafs without notice. Every attempt of this fort, even if menaced only and not carried into act, tends to excite a refiftance which otherwife would never be confolidated. The enemies of innovation become alarmed by the intemperance of its friends. The ftorm gradually thickens, and each party arms itfelf in filence with the weapons of violence and ftratagem. Let us obferve the confequence of this. So long as the conteft is merely between truth and fophiftry, we may look with tolerable affurance to the progrefs and refult. But, when we lay afide arguments, and have recourfe to the fword, the cafe is altered. Amidft the barbarous rage of war, and the clamorous din of civil contention, who fhall tell whether the event will be profperous or adverfe? The confequence may be, the riveting on us anew the chains of defpotifm, and infuring through a confiderable period the triumph of oppreffion, even if it fhould fail to carry us back to a ftate of torpor, and obliterate the memory of all our improvements.

If fuch are the genuine features of revolution, it will be fortunate if it can be made appear that revolution is wholly unneceffary, and the conviction of the underftanding a means fully adequate to the demolifhing political abufe. But this point has already been eftablifhed in a former part of our enquiry *. It is common to affirm, "that men may fufficiently know the error of their conduct, and yet be in no degree inclined to forfake it." This affertion however is no otherwife rendered plaufible, than by the vague manner in which we are accuftomed to underftand the term, knowledge. The voluntary actions of men originate in their opinions †. Whatever we believe to have the ftrongeft inducements in its behalf, that we infallibly chooſe and purſue. It is impoſſible that we ſhould chooſe any thing as evil. It is impoſſible that a man

* *Book* I, *Chap.* V. † *Book* I, *Chap.* V.

ſhould perpetrate a crime in the moment that he ſees it in all its enormity. In every example of this ſort there is a ſtruggle between knowledge on one ſide, and error or habit on the other. While the knowledge continues in all its vigour, the ill actions cannot be perpetrated. In proportion as the knowledge eſcapes from the mind and is no longer recollected, the error or habit may prevail. But it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe the permanence, as well as vigour of our perceptions, capable of being increaſed to an indefinite extent. Knowledge in this ſenſe, underſtanding by it a clear and undoubting apprehenſion ſuch as no deluſion can reſiſt, is a thing totally different from what is ordinarily called by that name, from a ſentiment ſeldom recollected, and when it is recollected, ſcarcely felt or underſtood.

The beauty of the conception here delineated of the political improvement of mankind muſt be palpable to every obſerver. Still it may be urged, "that, even granting this, truth may be too tardy in its operation. Ages will elapſe," we ſhall be told, "before ſpeculative views of the evils of privilege and monopoly ſhall have ſpread ſo wide and been felt ſo deeply, as to baniſh theſe evils without commotion or ſtruggle. It is eaſy for a reaſoner to ſit down in his cloſet, and amuſe himſelf with the beauty of this conception; but in the mean time mankind are ſuffering, injuſtice is hourly perpetrated, and generations of men may languiſh in the midſt of fair promiſes and hopes, and leave the ſtage without participating in the benefit. Cheat us not then," it will be ſaid, "with remote and uncertain proſpects; but let us embrace a method which ſhall ſecure us ſpeedy deliverance from evils too hateful to be endured."

In anſwer to this repreſentation it is to be obſerved, firſt, that every attempt ſuddenly to reſcue a whole community from an uſurpation the evils of which few underſtand, has already been ſhown to be attended always with calamity, frequently with miſcarriage.

Secondly, it is a miſtake to ſuppoſe that, becauſe we have no popular commotions and violence, the generation in which we live will have no benefit from the improvement of our political principles. Every change of ſentiment from moral deluſion to truth, every addition we make to the clearneſs of our apprehenſion on this ſubject and the recollectedneſs and independence of our mind, is itſelf, abſtracted from the abſolute change of our inſtitutions, an unqueſtionable acquiſition. Freedom of inſtitution is deſirable, chiefly becauſe it is connected with independence of mind; if we gain the end, we may reaſonably conſent to be leſs ſolicitous about the means *. In reality however, wherever the political opinions of a community or any conſiderable portion of a community are changed, the inſtitutions are affected alſo. They relax their hold upon the mind; they are viewed with a different ſpirit; they gradually and almoſt without notice ſink into oblivion. The advantage gained in every ſtage of the progreſs without commotion, is nearly the preciſe advantage it is moſt for the intereſt of the public to ſecure.

In the mean time it is impoſſible not to remark a ſtriking futility in the objection we are endeavouring to anſwer. The objectors complain, "that the ſyſtem which truſts to reaſon alone, is calculated to deprive the preſent generation of the practical benefit of political improvements." Yet we have juſt ſhown that it ſecures to them great practical benefit; while on the other hand nothing is more common than to hear the advocates of force themſelves confeſs, that a grand revolution includes in it the ſacrifice of one generation. Its conductors encounter the calamities attendant on fundamental innovation, that their poſterity may reap the fruits in tranquillity.

Thirdly, it is a miſtake to ſuppoſe that the ſyſtem

* *Chap.* I, *p.* 210

of trusting to reason alone, is calculated to place fundamental reform at an immeasurable distance. It is the nature of all science and improvement to be slow and in a manner imperceptible in its first advances. Its commencement is as it were by accident. Few advert to it; few have any perception of its existence. It attains its growth in obscurity; and its result, though long in the preparation, is to a considerable degree sudden and unexpected. Thus it is perhaps that we ought to regard the introduction of printing as having given its full security to the emancipation of mankind. But this progressive consequence was long unsuspected; and it was reserved for the penetrating mind of Wolsey to predict almost three centuries ago, speaking in the name of the Romish clergy, "We must destroy the press; or the press will destroy us." At present it requires no extraordinary sagacity to perceive that the most enormous abuses of political institution are hastening to their end. There is no enemy to this auspicious crisis more to be feared than the well meaning, but intemperate, champion of the general good.

There is a passage in a work of Helvetius written to be published after his death, which happened in 1771, so much in the tone of the dissatisfied and despairing advocates of public liberty at present, as to deserve to be cited in this place. "In the history of every people," says he, "there are moments, in which, uncertain of the side they shall choose, and balanced between political good and evil, they feel a desire to be instructed; in which the soil, so to express myself, is in some manner prepared, and may easily be penetrated by the dew of truth. At such a moment the publication of a valuable book may give birth to the most auspicious reforms: but, when that moment is no more, the nation becomes insensible to the best motives, is by the nature of its government plunged deeper and deeper in ignorance and stupidity. The soil of intellect is then hard and impenetrable; the rains may fall, may

ſpread their moiſture upon the ſurface, but the proſpect of fertility is gone. Such is the condition of France. Her people are become the contempt of Europe. No ſalutary criſis ſhall ever reſtore them to liberty*."

It is ſcarcely neceſſary to add, that the French revolution was at this time preparing by an inceſſant chain of events; and that the train may particularly be conſidered as taking its date from the circumſtance, the deſtruction of the parliaments by Louis XV, which inſpired Helvetius with ſo melancholy a preſage.

An additional ſupport to the objection we are here attempting to remove, may be derived from the idea, not only "that truth is ſlow in its progreſs," but "that it is not always progreſſive, but ſubject, like other human things, to the viciſſitudes of flux and reflux." This opinion has hitherto been of great influence in public affairs, and it has been conſidered as "the part of a wiſe ſtateſman to embrace the opportunity, when the people are inclined to any meaſure in which he wiſhes to engage them, and not to wait, till their fervour has ſubſided, and the moment of willing co-operation is paſt."

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* *Dans chaque nation il eſt des momens où les citoyens, incertains du parti qu'ils doivent prendre, et ſuſpendus entre un bon et un mauvais gouvernement, éprouvent la ſoif de l'inſtruction, où les eſprits, ſi je l'oſe dire, préparés et ameublis peuvent être facilement penétrés de la roſée de la vérité. Qu'en ce moment un bon ouvrage paroiſſe, il peut opérer d'heureuſes réformes: mais cet inſtant paſſé, les citoyens, inſenſibles à la gloire, ſont par la forme de leur gouvernement invinciblement entraînés vers l'ignorance et l'abrutiſſement. Alors les eſprits ſont la terre endurcie: l'eau de la vérité y tombe, y coule, mais ſans la féconder. Tel eſt l'état de la France. Cette nation avilie eſt aujourd'hui le mépris de l'Europe. Nulle criſe ſalutaire ne lui rendra la liberté.*" *De l'Homme, Préface.*

Undoubtedly there is the appearance of flux and reflux in human affairs. In ſubordinate articles there will be a faſhion rendering one truth more popular and more an object of attention at one time than another. But the maſs of truth ſeems too large a conſideration to be ſuſceptible of theſe viciſſitudes. It has proceeded, from the revival of letters to the preſent hour, with an irreſiſtible advance; and the apparent deviouſneſſes of literature ſeem to reſolve themſelves into a grand collective conſiſtency. Not one ſtep has been made in retrogreſſion. Mathematics, natural philoſophy, moral philoſophy, philology and politics have reached by regular improvements to their preſent degree of perfection.

"But, whatever may be ſaid of the hiſtory of the human mind ſince the revival of letters, its hiſtory from the earlieſt records of man diſplays a picture of a different ſort. Here certainly it has not been all progreſſion. Greece and Rome preſent themſelves like two favoured ſpots in the immenſe deſert of intellect; and their glory in this reſpect was exceedingly tranſient. Athens arrived at an excellence ſo great, in poetry, in eloquence, in the acuteneſs and vigour of its philoſophers, and in ſkill in the fine arts, as all the ages of the world are not able to parallel. But this ſkill was attained only to be afterwards forgotten; it was ſucceeded by a night of barbariſm; and we are at this moment, in ſome of theſe points, exerting ourſelves to arrive at the ground which they formerly occupied. The ſame remarks which apply to individual improvement, equally apply to the ſubject of politics; we have not yet realiſed the political advantages, to which they were indebted for their greatneſs."

There is but one conſideration that can be oppoſed to this ſtatement: the diſcovery of printing. By this art we ſeem to be ſecured againſt the future periſhing of human improvement. Knowledge is communicated to too many individuals to afford its adverſaries a

chance of bereaving us of it. The monopoly of science, though, from the love of distinction which so extensively characterises the human race, it has been endeavoured to be prolonged, is substantially at an end. By the easy multiplication of copies and the cheapness of books, every one has access to them. The extreme inequality of information among different members of the same community which existed in ancient times, is diminished. A race of men is become numerous, which was then comparatively unknown, and we see vast multitudes who, though condemned to the perpetual acquisition of the means of subsistence, have yet a superficial knowledge of most of the discoveries and topics which are investigated by the learned. The consequence is that, the possessors of knowledge being more, its influence is more certain. Under different circumstances it was occasionally only that men were wrought upon to extraordinary exertions; but with us the whole is regular and systematical.

There is one general observation which ought to be made, before the subject is dismissed. It has perhaps sufficiently appeared from the preceding discussion, that revolutions are necessarily attended with many circumstances worthy of our disapprobation, and that they are by no means essential to the political improvement of mankind. Yet, after all, it ought not to be forgotten that, though the connection be not essential or requisite, revolutions and violence have too often been coeval with important changes of the social system. What has so often happened in time past, is not unlikely occasionally to happen in future. The duty therefore of the true politician is to postpone revolution, if he cannot entirely prevent it. It is reasonable to believe that, the later it occurs, and the more generally ideas of political good and evil are previously understood, the shorter and the less deplorable will be the mischiefs attendant on revolution. The friend of human happiness will endeavour to prevent

violence; but it would be the mark of a weak and valetudinarian temper, to turn away our eyes from human affairs in diſguſt, and refuſe to contribute our labours and attention to the general weal, becauſe perhaps at laſt violence may forcibly intrude itſelf. It is our duty to make a proper advantage of circumſtances as they ariſe, and not withdraw ourſelves becauſe every thing is not conducted according to our ideas of propriety. The men who grow angry with corruption and impatient at injuſtice, and through thoſe ſentiments favour the abettors of revolution, have even an obvious apology to palliate their error; theirs is the exceſs of a virtuous feeling. At the ſame time, however amiable may be the ſource of their error, the error itſelf is probably fraught with conſequences pernicious to mankind.

CHAP. III.

OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS.

Arguments in their favour.—Anſwer.—Aſſociations put a part for the whole—are attended with party ſpirit—declamation—cabal—contentious diſputes—reſtleſſneſs—and tumult.—Utility of ſocial communication.—Exception in favour of aſſociations.—Another exception.—Concluſion.

A QUESTION ſuggeſts itſelf under this branch of enquiry, reſpecting the propriety of aſſociations among the people at large, for the purpoſe of operating a change in their political inſtitutions.

Many arguments have been alleged in favour of ſuch aſſociations. It has been ſaid, "that they are neceſſary to give effect to public opinion which, in its inſulated ſtate, is incapable of counteracting abuſes the moſt generally diſapproved, or of carrying into effect what is moſt generally deſired." They have

been repreſented " as indiſpenſable for the purpoſe of aſcertaining public opinion, which muſt otherwiſe for ever remain in a great degree problematical." Laſtly, they have been pointed out, " as the moſt uſeful means, for generating a ſound public opinion, and diffuſing in the moſt rapid and effectual manner political information."

In anſwer to theſe allegations various things may be obſerved. That opinion will always have its weight *; that all government is founded in opinion †; and that public inſtitutions will fluctuate with the fluctuations of opinion, without its being neceſſary for that purpoſe that opinion, ſhould be furniſhed with any extraordinary organ ‡; are points perhaps ſufficiently eſtabliſhed in the preceding diviſions of this work. Theſe principles amount to a ſufficient anſwer to the two firſt arguments in favour of political aſſociations: the third ſhall receive a more particular diſcuſſion.

One of the moſt obvious features of political aſſociation, is its tendency to make a part ſtand for the whole. A number of perſons, ſometimes greater and ſometimes leſs combine together. The tendency of their combination, often avowed, but always unavoidable, is to give to their opinion a weight and operation, which the opinion of unconnected individuals cannot have. A greater number, ſome from the urgency of their private affairs, ſome from a temper averſe to ſcenes of concourſe and contention, and others from a conſcientious diſapprobation of the meaſures purſued withhold themſelves from ſuch combinations. The acrimonious, the intemperate and the artful will generally be found among the moſt forward in matters of this kind. The prudent, the

* *Book* I, *Chap.* V.

† *Book* I, *Chap.* VI, *p.* 92; *Book* II, *Chap.* III, *p.* 126.

‡ *Book* I, *Chap.* V; *Book* III, *Chap.* VII; *Book* IV, *Chap.* II.

ſober, the ſceptical and the contemplative, thoſe who have no reſentments to gratify and no ſelfiſh purpoſes to promote, will be overborne and loſt in the progreſs. What juſtification can be advanced, for a few perſons who thus, from mere impetuoſity and incontinence of temper, occupy a poſt, the very principle of which is, the paſſing them for ſomething greater and more important in the community than they are? Is the buſineſs of reform likely to be well and judiciouſly conducted in ſuch hands? Add to this, that aſſociations in favour of one ſet of political tenets are likely to engender counter-aſſociations in favour of another. Thus we ſhould probably be involved in all the miſchiefs of reſiſtance, and all the uproar of revolution.

Political reform cannot be uſefully effected, but through the medium of the diſcovery of political truth. But truth will never be inveſtigated in a manner ſufficiently promiſing, if violence and paſſion be not removed to a diſtance. To whatever property adhering to the human mind, or accident affecting it we are to aſcribe the phenomenon, certain it is that truth does not lie upon the ſurface. It is laborious enquiry that has in almoſt all inſtances led to important diſcovery. If therefore we are deſirous to liberate ourſelves and our neighbours from the influence of prejudice, we muſt ſuffer nothing but arguments to bear ſway in the diſcuſſion. The writings and the tenets which offer themſelves to public attention, ſhould reſt upon their own merits. No patronage, no recommendations, no liſt of venerable names to bribe our ſuffrage, no importunity to induce us, to beſtow upon them our conſideration, and to conſider them with favour. Theſe however are ſmall matters. It is much worſe than this, when any ſpecies of publications is patroniſed by political aſſociations. The publications are then peruſed, not to ſee whether what they contain is true or falſe, but that the

reader may learn from them how he is to think upon the ſubjects of which they treat. A ſect is generated, and upon grounds not leſs irrational than thoſe of the worſt ſuperſtition that ever infeſted mankind.

If we would arrive at truth, each man muſt be taught to enquire and think for himſelf. If a hundred men ſpontaneouſly engage the whole energy of their faculties upon the ſolution of a given queſtion, the chance of ſucceſs will be greater than if only ten men are ſo employed. By the ſame reaſon the chance will alſo be increaſed, in proportion as the intellectual operations of theſe men are individual, and their concluſions are ſuggeſted by the reaſon of the thing, uninfluenced by the force either of compulſion or ſympathy. But in political aſſociations the object of each man is to identify his creed with that of his neighbour. We learn the Shibboleth of a party. We dare not leave our minds at large in the field of enquiry, leſt we ſhould arrive at ſome tenet diſtaſted by our party. We have no temptation to enquire. Party has a more powerful tendency, than perhaps any other circumſtance in human affairs, to render the mind quieſcent and ſtationary. Inſtead of making each man an individual, which the intereſt of the whole requires, it reſolves, all underſtandings into one common maſs, and ſubtracts from each the varieties that could alone diſtinguiſh him from a brute machine, Having learned the creed of our party, we have no longer any employment for thoſe faculties which might lead us to detect its errors. We have arrived, in our own opinion, at the laſt page of the volume of truth; and all that remains, is by ſome means to effect the adoption of our ſentiments, as the ſtandard of right to the whole race of mankind. The indefatigable votary of juſtice and truth, will adopt a mode of proceeding the oppoſite of this. He will mix at large

among his ſpecies; he will converſe with men of all orders and parties; he will fear to attach himſelf in his intercourſe to any particular ſet of men, leſt his thoughts ſhould become inſenſibly warped, and he ſhould make to himſelf a world of petty dimenſions, inſtead of that liberal and various ſcene in which nature has permitted him to expatiate. In fine, from theſe conſiderations it appears, that aſſociations, inſtead of promoting the growth and diffuſion of truth, tend only to check its accumulation, and render its operation, as far as poſſible, unnatural and miſchievous.

There is another circumſtance to be mentioned, ſtrongly calculated to confirm this poſition. A neceſſary attendant upon political aſſociations, is harangue and declamation. A majority of the members of any numerous popular ſociety, will look to theſe harangues, as the ſchool in which they are to ſtudy, in order to become the reſervoirs of practical truth to the reſt of mankind. But harangues and declamation lead to paſſion, and not to knowledge. The memory of the hearer is crowded with pompous nothings, with images and not arguments. He is never permitted to be ſober enough to weigh things with an unſhaken hand. It would be inconſiſtent with the art of eloquence to ſtrip the ſubject of every meretricious ornament. Inſtead of informing the underſtanding of the hearer by a ſlow and regular progreſſion, the orator muſt beware of detail, muſt render every thing rapid, and from time to time work up the paſſions of his hearer to a tempeſt of applauſe. Truth can ſcarcely be acquired in crowded halls and amidſt noiſy debates. Where hope and fear, triumph and reſentment are perpetually afloat, the ſeverer faculties of inveſtigation are compelled to quit the field. Truth dwells with contemplation. We can ſeldom make much progreſs in the buſineſs of diſentangling error and deluſion, but in ſequeſtered

privacy, or in the tranqnil interchange of ſentiments that takes place between two perſons.

In every numerous aſſociation of men there will be ſome portion of rivalſhip and ambition. Thoſe perſons who ſtand forward in the aſſembly, will be anxious to increaſe the number of their favourers and adherents. This anxiety will neceſſarily engender ſome degree of art. It is unavoidable that, in thinking much of the public, they ſhould not be led by this propenſity to think much alſo of themſelves. In the propoſitions they bring forward, in the ſubjects they diſcuſs, in the ſide they eſpouſe of theſe ſubjects, they will inevitably be biaſſed by the reflection what will be moſt acceptable to their partiſans, and popular with their hearers. There is a ſort of partiality to particular men that is commendable. We ought to honour uſefulneſs, and adhere to worth. But the partiality which is diſingenuouſly cultivated by weakneſs on both ſides, is not commendable. The partiality, which grows out of a mutual ſurrender of the underſtanding, where the leader firſt reſigns the integrity of his judgment, that he may cheriſh and take advantage of the defects of his followers, bears an unfavourable aſpect upon the common welfare. In this ſcene truth cannot gain; on the contrary it is forgotten, that error, a more accommodating principle, may be exhibited to advantage, and ſerve the perſonal ends of its profeſſors.

Another feature attendant on collections of men, meeting together for the tranſaction of buſineſs, is contentious diſpute and long conſultation about matters of the moſt trivial importance. Every human being abounds, and ought to abound, in his own ſenſe. The buſineſs upon ſuch occaſions is to twiſt and diſtort the ſenſe of each, ſo that, though they were all different at firſt, they may in the end be all alike. Is any propoſition, letter or declaration to be drawn up in the name of the whole? Perhaps it is conſided to one man at firſt, but it is amended, altered and metamorphoſed

according to the fancy of many, till at last, what once perhaps was reasonable, comes out the most inextricable jargon. Commas are to be adjusted, and particles debated. Is this an employment for rational beings? Is this an improvement upon the simple and inartificial scene of things, when each man speaks and writes his mind, in such eloquence as his sentiments dictate, and with unfettered energy; not anxious, while he gives vent to the enthusiasm of his conceptions, lest his words should not be exactly those in which his neighbours would equally have chosen to express themselves?

An appetite perpetually vexing the minds of political associators, is that of doing something, that their association may not fall into insignificancy. Affairs must wait upon them, and not they wait upon affairs. They are not content to act, only when some public emergence seems to require their interference, and point out to them a just mode of proceeding; they must make the emergence to satisfy the restlessness of their disposition. Thus they are ever at hand to mar the tranquillity of science, and the free, but unobserved, progress of truth. They terrify the rest of the community from boldness of opinion, and chain them down to their prejudices, by the alarm which is excited by their turbulence of character.—It should always be remembered in these cases, that all confederate action is of the nature of government, and that consequently every argument of this work which is calculated to display the evils of government, and to recommend the restraining it within as narrow limits as possible, is equally hostile to political associations. They have also a disadvantage peculiar to themselves, as they are an obvious usurpation upon the rights of the public without any pretence of delegation from the community at large.

The last circumstance to be enumerated among the disadvantages of political association, is its tendency to disorder and tumult. Nothing is more notorious,

than the eaſe with which the conviviality of a crowded feaſt, may degenerate into the depredations of a riot. While the ſympathy of opinion catches from man to man, eſpecially among perſons whoſe paſſions have been little uſed to the curb of judgment, actions may be determined on, which the ſolitary reflection of all would have rejected. There is nothing more barbarous, blood-thirſty and unfeeling, than the triumph of a mob. It ſhould be remembered that the members of ſuch aſſociations, are ever employed in cultivating a ſentiment peculiarly hoſtile to political juſtice, antipathy to individuals; not a benevolent love of equality, but a bitter and perſonal deteſtation of their oppreſſors.

But though aſſociation, in the received ſenſe of that term, muſt be granted to be an inſtrument of a very dangerous nature, unreſerved communication, eſpecially among perſons who are already awakened to the purſuit of truth, is of no leſs unqueſtionable advantage. There is at preſent in the world a cold reſerve that keeps man at a diſtance from man. There is an art in the practice of which individuals communicate for ever, without any one telling his neighbour what eſtimate he forms of his attainments and character, how they ought to be employed, and how to be improved. There is a ſort of domeſtic tactics, the object of which is to elude curioſity, and keep up the tenour of converſation, without the diſcloſure either of our feelings or opinions. The friend of juſtice will have no object more deeply at heart, than the annihilation of this duplicity. The man whoſe heart overflows with kindneſs for his ſpecies, will habituate himſelf to conſider in each ſucceſſive occaſion of ſocial intercourſe how that occaſion may be moſt beneficently improved. Among the topics to which he will be anxious to awaken attention, politics will occupy a principal ſhare.

Books have by their very nature but a limited operation; though, on account of their permanence, their

methodical disquisition, and their easiness of access, they are entitled to the foremost place. The number of those who almost wholly abstain from reading, is exceedingly great. Books, to those by whom they are read, have a sort of constitutional coldness. We review the arguments of an "insolent innovator" with sullenness, and are unwilling to expand our minds to take in all their force. It is with difficulty that we obtain the courage to strike into untrodden paths, and question tenets that have been generally received. But conversation accustoms us to hear a variety of sentiments, obliges us to exercise patience and attention, and gives freedom and elasticity to our disquisitions. A thinking man, if he will recollect his intellectual history, will find that he has derived inestimable benefit from the stimulus and surprise of colloquial suggestions; and, if he review the history of literature, will perceive that minds of great acuteness and ability have commonly existed in a cluster.

It follows that the promoting the best interests of mankind eminently depends upon the freedom of social communication. Let us figure to ourselves a number of individuals, who, having first stored their minds with reading and reflection, proceed afterwards in candid and unreserved conversation to compare their ideas, suggest their doubts, examine their mutual difficulties, and cultivate a collected and striking manner of delivering their sentiments. Let us suppose these men, prepared by mutual intercourse, to go forth to the world, to explain with succinctness and simplicity, and in a manner calculated to arrest attention, the true principles of society. Let us suppose their hearers instigated in their turn to repeat these truths to their companions. We shall then have an idea of knowledge as perpetually gaining ground, unaccompanied with peril in the means of its diffusion. Reason will spread, and not a brute and unintelligent sympathy. Discussion perhaps never exists with so much vigour and utility as in the conversation of two

perſons. It may be carried on with advantage in ſmall and friendly circles. Does the fewneſs of their numbers imply the rarity of their exiſtence? Far otherwiſe: ſhow to mankind by an adequate example the advantages of political diſcuſſion undebauched by political enmity and vehemence, and the beauty of the ſpectacle will ſoon render it contagious. Every man will commune with his neighbour. Every man will be eager to tell and hear what the intereſts of all require them to know. The bolts and fortifications of the temple of truth will be removed. The craggy ſteep of ſcience, which it was before difficult to aſcend, will be levelled. Knowledge will be acceſſible to all. Wiſdom will be the inheritance of man, and none will be excluded from it but by their own heedleſſneſs and prodigality. Truth, and above all political truth, is not hard of acquiſition, but from the ſupercilioufneſs of its profeſſors. It has been ſlow and tedious of improvemement, becauſe the ſtudy of it has been relegated to doctors and civilians. It has produced little effect upon the practice of mankind, becauſe it has not been allowed a plain and direct appeal to their underſtandings. Remove theſe obſtacles, render it the common property, bring it into daily uſe, and we may reaſonably promiſe ourſelves conſequences of the moſt ineſtimable value.

But theſe conſequences are the property only of independent and impartial diſcuſſion. If once the unambitious and candid circles of enquiring men be ſwallowed up in the inſatiate gulf of noiſy aſſemblies, the opportunity of improvement is annihilated. The happy varieties of ſentiment, which ſo eminently contribute to intellectual acuteneſs, are loſt. A fallacious uniformity of opinion is produced, which no man eſpouſes from conviction, but which carries all men along with a reſiſtleſs tide. Human beings ſhould meet together, not to inforce, but to enquire. Truth diſclaims the alliance of marſhalled numbers.

The ſame qualifications belong to this ſubject as

before to the head of revolutions. Though from what has been ſaid it may ſufficiently appear, that aſſociation is ſcarcely in any caſe to be deſired, there are conſiderations which ſhould lead us ſometimes to judge it with moderation and forbearance. There is one mode, according to which the benefit of mankind may beſt be promoted, and which ought always to be employed. But mankind are imperfect beings. While opinion is advancing with ſilent ſtep, impatience and zeal may be expected ſomewhat to outrun her progreſs. Aſſociations, as a meaſure intrinſically wrong, the wiſe man will endeavour to check and poſtpone as much as he can. But, when the criſis arrives, he will not be induced by the irregularities of the friends of equality, to remain neutral, but will forward her reign by the beſt means the neceſſity of the caſe will admit. It may even happen that, in the moment of convulſion, and the terror of general anarchy, ſomething in the nature of aſſociation may be indiſpenſably connected with the general ſafety. But, even granting this, it need not be prepared beforehand. Such preparation wears out the expedient, and renders it uſeleſs and inſufficient at the time that it was neceſſary. In a criſis really auſpicious to public liberty, it is reaſonable to believe that there will be patriots, called out on the ſpur of the occaſion and by the ſtate of political knowledge in general, who will be adequate to the ſcenes they have to encounter. The ſoil in which ſuch men are to be matured, is leſs that of action, than of enquiry and inſtruction.

Again; there are two objects which aſſociation may propoſe to itſelf, general reform and the remedy of ſome preſſing and momentary evil. Theſe objects may be entitled to a different treatment. The firſt undoubtedly ought to proceed with a leiſurely ſtep and in all poſſible tranquillity. The ſecond appears to require ſomewhat more of activity. It is the characteriſtic of truth, to truſt much to its own energy, and to reſiſt invaſion rather by the force of convic-

tion than of arms. The oppreſſed individual however ſeems particularly entitled to our aſſiſtance, and this can beſt be afforded by the concurrence of many. It appears reaſonable that, when a man is unjuſtly attacked by the whole force of the party in power, he ſhould be countenanced and protected by men who are determined to reſiſt ſuch oppreſſive partiality, and prevent the rights of all from being wounded through the medium of the individual, as far as that can be done conſiſtently with peace and good order. It is probable however that every aſſociation will degenerate and become a maſs of abuſes, that is ſuffered to perpetuate itſelf, or to exiſt longer than is neceſſary for the ſingle and momentary purpoſe for which only it can juſtly be inſtituted.

It ſeems ſcarcely neceſſary to add in treating this ſubject, that the individuals who are engaged in the tranſactions here cenſured, have frequently been excited by the beſt intentions, and inſpired with the moſt liberal views. It would be in the higheſt degree unjuſt, if their undertaking ſhould be found of dangerous tendency, to involve the authors in indiſcriminate cenſure for conſequences they did not foreſee. But, in proportion to the purity of their views and the ſoundneſs of their principles, it were to be deſired they ſhould ſeriouſly reflect on the means they employ. It will be greatly to be lamented, if thoſe who, ſo far as regards their intention, are among the trueſt friends to the welfare of mankind, ſhould by the judiciouſneſs of their conduct, come to rank among its practical enemies.

CHAP. IV.

OF TYRANNICIDE.

Diverſity of opinions on this ſubject.—Argument in its vindication.—The deſtruction of a tyrant not a caſe of exception.—Conſequences of tyrannicide.—Aſſaſſination deſcribed.—Importance of ſincerity.

A QUESTION, connected with the mode of effecting political melioration, and which has been eagerly diſcuſſed among political reaſoners, is that of tyrannicide. The moraliſts of antiquity contended for the lawfulneſs of this practice; by the moderns it has been generally condemned.

The arguments in its favour are built upon a very obvious principle. "Juſtice ought univerſally to be adminiſtered. Crimes of an inferior deſcription are reſtrained, or pretended to be reſtrained, by the ordinary operations of juriſprudence. But criminals by whom the welfare of the whole is attacked, and who overturn the liberties of mankind, are out of the reach of this reſtraint. If juſtice be partially adminiſtered in ſubordinate caſes, and the rich man be able to oppreſs the poor with impunity, it muſt be admitted that a few examples of this ſort are inſufficient to authoriſe the laſt appeal of human beings. But no man will deny that the caſe of the uſurper and the deſpot is of the moſt atrocious nature. In this inſtance, all the proviſions of civil policy being ſuperſeded, and juſtice poiſoned at the ſource, every man is left to execute for himſelf the decrees of immutable equity."

It may however be doubted whether the deſtruction of a tyrant be in any reſpect a caſe of exception from the rules proper to be obſerved upon ordinary occaſions. The tyrant has indeed no particular ſanctity annexed to his perſon, and may be killed

with as little ſcruple as any other man, when the object is that of repelling perſonal aſſault. In all other caſes, the extirpation of the offender by a ſelf-appointed authority, does not appear to be the deſirable mode of counteracting injuſtice.

For, firſt, either the nation, whoſe tyrant you would deſtroy, is ripe for the aſſertion and maintenance of its liberty, or it is not. If it be, the tyrant ought to be depoſed with every appearance of publicity. Nothing can be more improper, than for an affair, intereſting to the general weal, to be conducted as if it were an act of darkneſs and ſhame. It is an ill leſſon we read to mankind, when a proceeding, built upon the broad baſis of general juſtice, is permitted to ſhrink from public ſcrutiny. The piſtol and the dagger may as eaſily be made the auxiliaries of vice as of virtue. To proſcribe all violence, and neglect no means of information and impartiality, is the moſt effectual ſecurity we can have for an iſſue conformable to the voice of reaſon and truth.

If on the other hand the nation be not ripe for a ſtate of freedom, the man who aſſumes to himſelf the right of interpoſing violence, may indeed ſhew the fervour of his conception, and gain a certain degree of notoriety; but he will not fail to be the author of new calamities to his country. The conſequences of tyrannicide are well known. If the attempt prove abortive, it renders the tyrant ten times more bloody, ferocious and cruel than before. If it ſucceed, and the tyranny be reſtored, it produces the ſame effect upon his ſucceſſors. In the climate of deſpotiſm ſome ſolitary virtues may ſpring up. But in the midſt of plots and conſpiracies there is neither truth, nor confidence, nor love, nor humanity.

Secondly, the true merits of the queſtion will be ſtill farther underſtood, if we reflect on the nature of aſſaſſination. The miſtake, which has been incurred upon this ſubject, is to be imputed principally to the ſuperficial view that has been taken of it. If its ad-

vocates had followed the conspirator through all his windings, and observed his perpetual alarm lest truth should become known, they would probably have been less indiscriminate in their applause. No action can be imagined, more directly at war with a principle of ingenuousness and candour. Like all that is most odious in the catalogue of vices, it delights in obscurity. It shrinks from the piercing light of day. It avoids all question, and hesitates and trembles before the questioner. It struggles for a tranquil gaiety, and is only complete where there is the most perfect hypocrisy. It changes the use of speech, and composes every feature the better to deceive.

> *Between the acting of a dreadful thing*
> *And the first motion, all the interim* *

is mystery and reserve. Is it possible to believe that the person who has upon him all the indications of guilt, is engaged in an action which virtue enjoins? The same duplicity follows him to the last. Imagine to yourself the conspirators kneeling at the feet of Cæsar, as they did the moment before they destroyed him! not all the virtue of Brutus can save them from your indignation.

There cannot be a better instance than that of which we are treating, to prove the importance of general sincerity. We see in this example that an action, which has been undertaken from the best motives, may, by a defect in this particular, tend to overturn the very foundations of justice and happiness. Wherever there is assassination there is an end of all confidence among men. Protests and asseverations go for nothing. No man presumes to know his neighbour's intention. The boundaries, that have hitherto served to divide virtue and vice are gone. The true interests of mankind require, not the removal, but the confirmation

* *Shakespeare: Julius Cæsar, Act* ii.

of these boundaries. All morality proceeds upon mutual confidence and esteem, will grow and expand as the grounds of that confidence shall be more evident, and must inevitably decay in proportion as they are undermined.

CHAP. V.

OF THE CULTIVATION OF TRUTH.

Source of the aristocratical system.—The opposite principle stated.—Subject of this chapter—of the next.—Importance of science as conducing—to our happiness—to our virtue.—Virtue the best gift of man—proved by its undecaying excellence—by its manner of adapting itself to all situations—cannot be effectually propagated but by a cultivated mind.—Misguided virtue considered.—Importance of science to our political improvement.

THAT we may adequately understand the power and operation of opinion in meliorating the institutions of society, it is requisite that we should consider the value and energy of truth. There is no topic more fundamental to the principles of political science or the reasonings of this work. It is from this point that we may most perspicuously trace the opposite tenets, of the advocates of privilege and aristocracy on the one hand, and the friends of equality and one universal measure of justice on the other. The partisans of both, at least the more enlightened and honourable partisans, acknowledge one common object, the welfare of the whole, of the community and mankind. But the adherents of the old systems of government affirm, "that the imbecility of the human mind is such as to make it unadviseable that man should be trusted with himself; that his genuine condition is that of perpetual pupillage; that he is regulated

by passions and partial views, and cannot be governed by pure reason and undiluted truth; that it is the business of a wise man not to subvert either in himself or others delusions which are useful and prejudices which are salutary; and that he is the worst enemy of his species who attempts in whatever mode to introduce a form of society, where no advantage is taken to restrain us from vices by illusion, from which we cannot be restrained by reason." Every man who adheres in whole or in part to the tenets here enumerated, will perhaps, in proportion as he follows them into their genuine consequences, be so far a partisan of aristocracy.

Tenets the opposite of these, constitute the great outline of the present work. If there be any truth in the reasonings hitherto adduced, we are entitled to conclude that morality, the science of human happiness, the principle which binds the individual to the species, and the inducements which are calculated to persuade us to model our conduct in the way most conducive to the advantage of all, does not rest upon imposture and delusion, but upon grounds that discovery will never undermine and wisdom never refute. We do not need therefore to be led to that which is fitting and reasonable, by deceitful allurements. We have no reason to fear that the man, who shall see farthest, and judge with the most perfect penetration, will be less estimable and useful, or will find fewer charms in another's happiness and virtue, than if he were under the dominion of error. If the conduct I am required to observe be reasonable, there is no plainer or more forcible mode of persuading me to adopt it, than to exhibit it in its true colours, and show me the benefits that will really accrue from it. As long as these benefits are present to my mind, I shall have a desire, an ardour for performing the action which leads to them, to the full as great as the occasion will justify; and, if the occasion be of real magnitude, my ardour will

be more genuine, and better endure the test of experiment, than it can, when combined with narrow views or visionary credulity. Truth and falsehood cannot subsist together: he that sees the merits of a case in all their clearness, cannot in that instance be the dupe either of prejudice or superstition. Nor is there any reason to believe that sound conviction will be less permanent in its influence, than sophistry and error *.

The value of truth will be still farther illustrated, if we consider it in detail, and enquire into its effects, either abstractedly, under which form it bears the appellation of science and knowledge; or practically as it relates to the incidents and commerce of ordinary life, when it is known by the denomination of sincerity.

Abstractedly considered, it conduces to the happiness and virtue of the individual, as well as to the improvement of our social institutions.

In the discovery and knowledge of truth seems to be comprised for the most part all that an impartial and reflecting mind is accustomed to admire. No one is ignorant of the pleasures of knowledge. In human life there must be a distribution of time and a variety of occupations. Now there is perhaps no occupation so much at our command, no pleasure of the means of which we are so little likely to be deprived, as that which is intellectual. Sublime and expensive ideas produce delicious emotions. The acquisition of truth, the perception of the regularity with which proposition flows out of proposition, and one step of science leads to another, has never failed to reward the man who engaged in this species of employment. Knowledge contributes two ways to our happiness: first by the new sources of enjoyment which it opens upon us, and next by furnishing us with a clue in the selection of all other pleasures.

* *Book* I, *Chap.* V; *Book* V, *Chap.* XV.

No well informed man can ſeriouſly doubt of the advantages with reſpect to happineſs, of a capacious and improved intellect over the limited conceptions of a brute. Virtuous ſentiments are alſo a ſource of perſonal pleaſure, and that of a more exquiſite kind than intellectual improvements. But virtue itſelf depends for its value upon the energies of intellect. If the beings we are capable of benefiting were ſuſceptible of nothing more than brutes are, we ſhould have little pleaſure in benefiting them, or in contemplating their happineſs. But man has ſo many enjoyments, is capable of ſo high a degree of perfection, of exhibiting, ſocially conſidered, ſo admirable a ſpectacle, and of himſelf ſo truly eſtimating and favouring that ſpectacle, that when we are engaged in promoting his benefit, we are indeed engaged in a ſublime and raviſhing employment. This is the caſe whether our exertions are directed to the advantage of the ſpecies or the individual. We rejoice when we ſave an ordinary man from deſtruction more than when we ſave a brute, becauſe we recollect how much more he can feel, and how much more he can do. The ſame principle produces a ſtill higher degree of congratulation, in proportion as the man we ſave is more highly accompliſhed in talents and virtues.

Secondly, truth conduces to our improvement in virtue. Virtue in its pureſt and moſt liberal ſenſe ſuppoſes an extenſive ſurvey of cauſes and their conſequences, that, having ſtruck a juſt balance between the benefits and injuries that adhere to humam affairs, we may adopt the proceeding which leads to the greateſt practicable advantage. Virtue, like every other endowment of man, admits of degrees. He therefore muſt be confeſſed to be moſt virtuous, who chooſes with the ſoundeſt judgment the greateſt practicable good of his ſpecies. But, in order to chooſe the greateſt practicable good, he muſt be intimately acquainted with the nature of man, its general features and its varieties. In order to execute it, he muſt have com-

fidered the different inſtruments for impreſſing the mind, and the modes of applying them, and muſt know the propereſt moment for bringing them into action. In whatever light we conſider virtue, whether we place it in the act or the diſpoſition, its degree muſt be intimately connected with the degree of knowledge, No man can ſo much as love virtue ſufficiently, who has not an acute and lively perception of its beauty, and its tendency to produce the moſt ſolid and permanent happineſs. What compariſon can be made between the virtue of Socrates, and that of a Hottentot or a Siberian? A humorous example how univerſally this truth has been perceived, may be taken from Tertullian who, as a father of the church, was obliged to maintain the hollowneſs and inſignificance of pagan virtues, and accordingly aſſures us, "that the moſt ignorant peaſant under the Chriſtian diſpenſation poſſeſſes more real knowledge than the wiſeſt of the ancient philoſophers *.

We ſhall be more fully aware of the connection between virtue and knowledge, if we conſider that the higheſt employment of virtue is to propagate itſelf. Virtue alone deſerves to be conſidered as leading to true happineſs, and happineſs of all others the moſt ſolid and durable. Senſual pleaſures are momentary; they fill a very ſhort portion of our time with enjoyment, and leave long intervals of painful vacuity. They charm principally by their novelty; by repetition they firſt abate of their poignancy, and at laſt become little leſs than wearifome. It is perhaps partly to be aſcribed to the high eſtimation in which ſenſual pleaſures are held that old age is ſo early and regular in its ravages. Our taſte for theſe pleaſures neceſſarily declines; with our taſte our activity; and with our activity gradually crumble away the chearfulneſs, the energy and the lives of thoſe whoſe dependence was

* *Apologia. Cap.* xlvi. *See this ſubject farther purſued in Appendix.*

placed upon these resources. Even knowledge and the enlargement of intellect are poor, when unmixed with sentiments of benevolence and sympathy. Emotions are scarcely ever thrilling and electrical without something of social feeling. When the mind expands in works of taste and imagination, it will usually be found that there is something moral in the cause which gives birth to this expansion; and science and abstraction will soon become cold, unless they derive new attractions from ideas of society. In proportion therefore to the virtue of the individual will be the permanence of his chearfulness, and the exquisiteness of his emotions. Add to which, benevolence is a resource which is never exhausted; but on the contrary, the more habitual is our patriotism or philanthrophy, the more will it become invigorating and ardent.

It is also impossible that any situation can occur in which virtue cannot find room to expatiate. In society there is continual opportunity for its active employment. I cannot have intercourse with a human being, who may not be the better for that intercourse. If he be already just and virtuous, these qualities are improved by communication. If he be imperfect and erroneous, there must always be some prejudice I may contribute to destroy, some motive to delineate, some error to remove. If I be prejudiced and imperfect myself, it cannot however happen that my prejudices and imperfections shall be exactly coincident with his. I may therefore inform him of the truths that I know, and even by the collision of prejudices truth is elicited. It is impossible that I should strenuously apply myself to his improvement with sincere motives of benevolence, without some good being the result. Nor am I more at a loss in solitude. In solitude I may accumulate the materials of social benefit. No situation can be so desperate as as to preclude these efforts. Voltaire, when shut up in the Bastille, and for ought he knew for life, deprived of the means either of wri-

ting or reading, arranged and in part executed the project of his Henriade*.

All these reasonings are calculated to persuade us that the most precious boon we can bestow upon others is virtue, and that the highest employment of virtue is to propagate itself. But, as virtue is inseparably connected with knowledge in my own mind, so by knowledge only can it be imparted to others. How can the virtue we have just been contemplating be produced, but by infusing comprehensive views and communicating energetic truths? Now that man alone is qualified to infuse these views, and communicate these truths, who is himself pervaded with them.

Let us suppose for a moment virtuous dispositions existing without knowledge or outrunning knowledge, the left of which is certainly possible; and we shall presently find how little such virtue is worthy to be propagated. The most generous views will in such cases frequently lead to the most nefarious actions. A Cranmer will be incited to the burning of heretics, and a Digby generate the Gunpowder Treason. But, to leave these extreme instances: in all cases where mistaken virtue leads to cruel and tyrannical actions, the mind will be rendered discontented and morose by the actions it perpetrates. Truth, immortal and ever present truth, is so powerful, that, in spite of all his prejudices, the upright man will suspect himself when he resolves upon an action that is at war with the plainest principles of morality. He will become melancholy, dissatisfied and anxious. His firmness will degenerate into obstinacy, and his justice into inexorable severity. The farther he pursues his system, the more erroneous will he become. The farther he pursues it, the less will he be satisfied with

* Vie de Voltaire, par M*** *(said to the marquis de Villette.)* A Geneve, 1786, Chap iv. *This is probably the best history of this great man which has yet appeared.*

it. As truth is an endleſs ſource of tranquillity and delight, error will be a prolific fountain of new miſtakes and diſcontent.

As to the third point, which is moſt eſſential to the enquiry in which we are engaged, the tendency of truth to the improvement of our political inſtitutions, there can be little room for ſcepticiſm or controverſy. If politics be a ſcience, inveſtigation muſt be the means of unfolding it it. If men reſemble each other in more numerous and eſſential particulars than thoſe in which they differ, if the beſt purpoſes that can be accompliſhed reſpecting them be to make them free, virtuous and wiſe, there muſt be one beſt method of advancing theſe common purpoſes, one beſt mode of ſocial exiſtence deducible from the principles of their nature. If truth be one, there muſt be one code of truths on the ſubject of our reciprocal duties. Nor is inveſtigation only the beſt mode of aſcertaining the principles of political juſtice and happineſs; it is alſo the beſt mode of introducing and eſtabliſhing them. Diſcuſſion is the path that leads to diſcovery and demonſtration. Motives ferment in the minds of great bodies of men, till their modes of ſociety experience a variation not leſs memorable than the variation of their ſentiments. The more familiar the mind becomes with the ideas of which theſe motives conſiſt, and the propoſitions that expreſs them, the more irreſiſtibly is it propelled to a general ſyſtem of proceeding in correſpondence witht hem.

Appendix, p. 249.

OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN UNDERSTANDING AND VIRTUE.

Can eminent virtue exist unconnected with talents?—Nature of virtue.—It is the offspring of understanding.—It generates understanding.—Illustration from other pursuits—love—ambition—applied.

Can eminent talents exist unconnected with virtue?—Argument in the affirmative from analogy—in the negative from the universality of moral speculation—from the nature of vice as founded in mistake.—The argument balanced.—Importance of a sense of justice.—Its connection with talents.—Illiberality with which men of talents are usually treated.

A PROPOSITION which, however evident in itself, seems never to have been considered with the attention it deserves, is that which affirms the connection between understanding and virtue. Can an honest ploughman be as virtuous as Cato? Is a man of weak intellects and narrow education as capable of moral excellence as the sublimest genius or the mind most stored with information and science?

To determine these questions it is necessary we should recollect the nature of virtue. Considered as a personal quality it consists in the disposition of the mind, and may be defined a desire to promote the benefit of intelligent beings in general, the quantity of virtue being as the quantity of desire. Now desire is another name for preference, or a perception of the excellence, real or supposed, of any object. I say real or supposed, for an object totally destitute of real and intrinsic excellence, may become an object of desire by means of the imaginary excellence that is ascribed to it. Nor is this the only mistake to which

human intelligences are liable. We may desire an object of absolute excellence, not for its real and genuine recommendations, but for some fictitious attractions we may impute to it. This is always in some degree the case, when a beneficial action is performed from an ill motive.

How far is this mistake compatible with real virtue? If I desire the benefit of intelligent beings, not from a clear and distinct perception of what it is in which their benefit consists, but from the unexamined lessons of education, from the physical effect of sympathy, or from any species of zeal unallied to and incommensurate with knowledge, can this desire be admitted for virtuous? Nothing seems more inconsistent with our ideas of virtue. A virtuous preference is the preference of an object for the sake of certain beneficial qualities which really belong to that object. To attribute virtue to any other species of preference would be the same as to suppose that an accidental effect of my conduct, which was altogether out of my view at the time of adopting it, might entitle me to the appellation of virtuous.

Hence it appears, first, that virtue consists in a desire of the benefit of the species: and, secondly, that that desire only can be denominated virtuous, which flows from a distinct perception of the value, and consequently of the nature, of the thing desired. But how extensive must be the capacity that comprehends the full value of that benefit which is the object of virtue? It must begin with a collective idea of the human species. It must discriminate, among all the different causes that produce a pleasureable state of mind, that which produces the most exquisite and durable pleasure. Eminent virtue requires that I should have a grand view of the tendency of knowledge to produce happiness and of just political institution to favour the progress of knowledge. It demands that I should perceive in what manner social intercourse may be made conducive to virtue and felicity, and imagine the unspeakable

advantages that may arise from a coincidence and succession of generous efforts. These things are necessary, not merely for the purpose of enabling me to employ my virtuous disposition in the best manner, but also for the purpose of giving to that disposition a just animation and vigour. God, according to the ideas usually conceived of that being, is more benevolent than man, because he has a constant and clear perception of the nature of that end which his providence pursues.

A farther proof that a powerful understanding is inseparable from eminent virtue will suggest itself, if we recollect that earnest desire, in matters that fall within the compass of human exertion, never fails in some degree to generate capacity.

This proposition has been beautifully illustrated by the poets, when they have represented the passion of love as immediately leading in the breast of the lover to the attainment of many arduous accomplishments. It unlocks his tongue, and enables him to plead the cause of his passion with insinuating eloquence. It renders his conversation pleasing and his manners graceful. Does he desire to express his feelings in the language of verse? It dictates to him the most natural and pathetic strains, and supplies him with a just and interesting language which the man of mere reflection and science has often sought for in vain.

No picture can be more truly founded in a knowledge of human nature than this. The history of all eminent talents is of a similar kind. Did Themistocles desire to eclipse the trophies of the battle of Marathon? The uneasiness of this desire would not let him sleep, and all his thoughts were occupied with the invention of means to accomplish the purpose he had chosen. It is a well known maxim in the forming of juvenile minds, that the instruction, which is communicated by mere constraint, makes a slow and feeble impression; but that, when once you have inspired the mind with a love for its object, the scene

and the progreſs are entirely altered. The uneaſineſs of mind which earneſt deſire produces, doubles our intellectual activity; and as ſurely carries us forward with increaſed velocity towards our goal, as the expectation of a reward of ten thouſand pounds would prompt me to walk from London to York with firmer reſolution and in a ſhorter time.

Let the object be for a perſon uninſtructed in the rudiments of drawing to make a copy of ſome celebrated ſtatue. At firſt, we will ſuppoſe, his attempt ſhall be mean and unſucceſsful. If his deſire be feeble, he will be deterred by the miſcarriage of this eſſay. If his deſire be ardent and invincible, he will return to the attack. He will derive inſtruction from his failure. He will examine where and why he miſcarried. He will ſtudy his model with a more curious eye. He will perceive that he failed principally from the looſe and undigeſted idea he had formed of the object before him. It will no longer ſtand in his mind as one general maſs, but he will analyſe it, beſtowing upon each part in ſucceſſion a ſeparate conſideration.

The caſe is ſimilar in virtue as in ſcience. If I have conceived an earneſt deſire of being a benefactor of my ſpecies, I ſhall no doubt find out a channel in which for my deſire to operate, and ſhall be quick-ſighted in diſcovering the defects or comparative littleneſs of the plan I have choſen. But the choice of an excellent plan for the accompliſhment of an important purpoſe, and the exertion of a mind perpetually watchful to remove its defects, imply conſiderable underſtanding. The farther I am engaged in the purſuit of this plan the more will my capacity increaſe. If my mind flag and be diſcouraged in the purſuit, it will not be merely want of underſtanding, but want of deſire. My deſire and my virtue will be leſs, than thoſe of the man, who goes on with unremitted conſtancy in the ſame career.

Thus far we have only been considering how impossible it is that eminent virtue should exist in a weak understanding, and it is surprising that such a proposition should ever have been contested. It is a curious question to examine, how far the converse of this proposition is true, and in what degree eminent talents are compatible with the absence of virtue.

From the arguments already adduced it appears that virtuous desire is another name for a clear and distinct perception of the nature and value of the object of virtue. Hence it seems most natural to conclude, that, though understanding, or strong percipient power, is the indispensable prerequisite of virtue, yet it is necessary that this power should be fixed upon this object, in order to its producing the desired effect. Thus it is in art. Without genius no man ever was a poet; but it is necessary that general capacity should have been directed to this particular channel, for poetical excellence to be the result.

There is however some difference between the two cases. Poetry is the business of a few, virtue and vice are the affairs of all men. To every intellect that exists one or other of these qualities must properly belong. It must be granted that, where every other circumstance is equal, that man will be most virtuous, whose understanding has been most actively employed in the study of virtue. But morality has been in a certain degree an object of attention to all men. No person ever failed more or less to apply the standard of just and unjust to his own actions and those of others; and this has of course been generally done with most ingenuity by men of the greatest capacity.

It must farther be remembered that a vicious conduct is always the result of narrow views. A man of

powerful capacity and extenſive obſervation is leaſt likely to commit the miſtake, either of ſeeing himſelf as the only object of importance in the univerſe, or of conceiving that his own advantage may beſt be promoted by trampling on that of others. Liberal accompliſhments are ſurely in ſome degree connected with liberal principles. He, who takes into his view a whole nation as the ſubjects of his operation or the inſtruments of his greatneſs, may naturally be expected to entertain ſome kindneſs for the whole. He, whoſe mind is habitually elevated to magnificent conceptions, is not likely to ſink without ſtrong reluctance into thoſe ſordid purſuits, which engroſs ſo large a portion of mankind.

But, though theſe general maxims muſt be admitted for true, and would incline us to hope for a conſtant union between eminent talents and great virtues, there are other conſiderations which preſent a ſtrong drawback upon ſo agreeable an expectation. It is ſufficiently evident that morality in ſome degree enters into the reflections of all mankind. But it is equally evident, that it may enter for more or for leſs; and that there will be men of the higheſt talents, who have their attention diverted to other objects, and by whom it will be meditated upon with leſs earneſtneſs, than it may ſometimes be by other men who are in a general view their inferiors. The human mind is in ſome caſes ſo tenacious of its errors, and ſo ingenious in the invention of a ſophiſtry by which they may be vindicated, as to fruſtrate expectations of virtue in other reſpects the beſt founded.

From the whole of the ſubject it ſeems to appear, that men of talents, even when they are erroneous, are not deſtitute of virtue, and that there is a degree of guilt of which they are incapable. There is no ingredient that ſo eſſentially contributes to a virtuous character as a ſenſe of juſtice. Philanthropy, as contradiſtinguiſhed to juſtice, is rather an unreflecting feeling, than a rational principle.

It leads to an absurd indulgence, which is frequently more injurious than beneficial even to the individual it proposes to favour. It leads to a blind partiality, inflicting calamity without remorse upon many perhaps, in order to promote the imagined interest of a few. But justice measures by one inflexible standard the claims of all, weighs their opposite pretensions, and seeks to diffuse happiness, because happiness is the fit and reasonable adjunct of a conscious being. Wherever therefore a strong sense of justice exists, it is common and reasonable to say, that in that mind exists considerable virtue, though the individual from an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances may with all his great qualities be the instrument of a very small portion of benefit. Can great intellectual energy exist without a strong sense of justice?

It has no doubt resulted from a train of speculation similar to this, that poetical readers have commonly remarked Milton's devil to be a being of considerable virtue. It must be admitted that his energies centered too much in personal regards. But why did he rebel against his maker? It was, as he himself informs us, because he saw no sufficient reason for that extreme inequality of rank and power which the creator assumed. It was because prescription and precedent form no adequate ground for implicit faith. After his fall, why did he still cherish the spirit of opposition? From a persuasion that he was hardly and injuriously treated. He was not discouraged by the apparent inequality of the contest: because a sense of reason and justice was stronger in his mind, than a sense of brute force; because he had much of the feelings of an Epictetus or a Cato, and little of those of a slave. He bore his torments with fortitude, because he disdained to be subdued by despotic power. He sought revenge, because he could not think with tameness of the unexpostulating authority that assumed to dispose of him.

How beneficial and illuſtrious might the temper from which theſe qualities flowed have proved with a ſmall diverſity of ſituation!

Let us deſcend from theſe imaginary exiſtences to real hiſtory. We ſhall find that even Cæſar and Alexander had their virtues. There is great reaſon to believe that, however miſtaken was their ſyſtem of conduct, they imagined it reconcilable and even conducive to the general good. If they had deſired the general good more earneſtly, they would have underſtood better how to promote it.

Upon the whole it appears, that great talents are great energies, and that great energies cannot flow but from a powerful ſenſe of fitneſs and juſtice. A man of uncommon genius is a man of high paſſions and lofty deſign; and our paſſions will be found in the laſt analyſis to have their ſureſt foundation in a ſentiment of juſtice. If a man be of an aſpiring and ambitious temper, it is becauſe at preſent he finds himſelf out of his place, and wiſhes to be in it. Even the lover imagines that his qualities or his paſſion give him a title ſuperior to that of other men. If I accumulate wealth, it is becauſe I think that the moſt rational plan of life cannot be ſecured without it; and, if I dedicate my energies to ſenſual pleaſures, it is that I regard other purſuits as irrational and viſionary. All our paſſions would die in the moment they were conceived, were it not for this reinforcement. A man of quick reſentment, of ſtrong feelings, and who pertinaciouſly reſiſts every thing that he regards as an unjuſt aſſumption, may be conſidered as having in him the ſeeds of eminence. Nor is it eaſily to be conceived that ſuch a man ſhould not proceed from a ſenſe of juſtice to ſome degree of benevolence; as Milton's hero felt real compaſſion and ſympathy for his partners in misfortune.

If theſe reaſonings are to be admitted, what judgment ſhall we form of the deciſion of doctor Johnſon, who, ſpeaking of a certain obſcure tranſlator of the

odes of Pindar, says, that he was "one of the few poets to whom death needed not to be terrible*?" Let it be remembered that the error is by no means peculiar to doctor Johnson, though there are few instances in which it is carried to a more violent extreme, than in the general tenour of the work from which this quotation is taken. It was natural to expect that there would be a combination among the multitude to pull down intellectual eminence. Ambition is common to all men; and those, who are unable to rise to distinction, are at least willing to reduce others to their own standard. No man can completely understand the character of him with whom he has no sympathy of views, and we may be allowed to revile what we do not understand. But it is deeply to be regretted that men of talents should so often have entered into this combination. Who does not recollect with pain the vulgar abuse that Swift has thrown upon Dryden, and the mutual jealousies and animosities of Rousseau and Voltaire, men who ought to have co-operated for the salvation of the world?

CHAP. VI.

OF SINCERITY.

Its favourable tendencies in respect to—innocence—energy—Intellectual improvement—and philanthropy. History—and effects of insincerity.—Sincerity delineated.—Character of its adherents.

IT was farther proposed to consider the value of truth, in a practical view, as it relates to the incidents and commerce of ordinary life, under which form it is known by the denomination of sincerity.

The powerful recommendations attendant upon

* *Lives of the Poets: Life of West.*

sincerity are obvious. It is intimately connected with the general dissemination of innocence, energy, intellectual improvement and philanthropy.

Did every man impose this law upon himself, did he regard himself as not authorised to conceal any part of his character and conduct, this circumstance alone would prevent millions of actions from being perpetrated, in which we are now induced to engage by the prospect of secrecy and impunity. We have only to suppose men obliged to consider, before they determined upon an equivocal action, whether they chose to be their own historians, the future narrators of the scene in which they were acting a part, and the most ordinary imagination will instantly suggest how essential a variation would be introduced into human affairs. It has been justly observed that the popish practice of auricular confession is attended with some salutary effects. How much better would it be, if instead of an institution thus equivocal, and which has been made so dangerous an instrument of ecclesiastical despotism, every man were to make the world his confessional, and the human species the keeper of his conscience?

There is a farther benefit that would result to me from the habit of telling every man the truth, regardless of the dictates of worldly prudence and custom. I should acquire a clear, ingenuous and unembarrassed air. According to the established mode, of society, whenever I have a circumstance to state, which would require some effort of mind and discrimination to enable me to do it justice and state it with the proper effect, I fly from the task, and take refuge in silence or equivocation. But the principle which forbad me concealment, would keep my mind for ever awake and for ever warm. I should always be obliged to exert my attention, lest, in pretending to tell the truth, I should tell it in so imperfect and mangled a way as to produce the effect of falsehood. If I spoke to a man of my own faults or those of his neighbour,

I should be anxious not to suffer them to come distorted or exaggerated to his mind, or to permit what at first was fact, to degenerate into satire. If I spoke to him of the errors he had himself committed I should carefully avoid those inconsiderate expressions which might convert what was in itself beneficent into offence; and my thoughts would be full of that kindness and generous concern for his welfare, which such a task necessarily brings along with it. Sincerity would liberalise my mind, and make the eulogiums I had occasion to pronounce, clear, copious, and appropriate. Conversation would speedily exchange its present character of listlessness and insignificance for a Roman boldness and fervour; and, accustomed, at first by the fortuitous operation of circumstances, to tell men of things it was useful for them to know, I should speedily learn to study their advantage, and never rest satisfied with my conduct, till I found how to spend the hours I was in their company, in the way which was most rational and improving.

The effects of sincerity upon others would be similar to its effects upon him that practised it. How great would be the benefit, if every man were sure of meeting in his neighbour the ingenuous censor, who would tell him in person, and publish to the world, his virtues, his good deeds, his meanesses and his follies? We have never a strong feeling of these in our own case, except so far as they are confirmed to us by the suffrage of our neighbours. Knowledge, such as we are able to acquire it, depends in a majority of instances, not upon the single efforts of the individual, but upon the consent of other human understandings sanctioning the judgment of our own. It is the uncertainty of which every man is conscious as to his solitary judgment, that produces for the most part zeal for proselytism, and impatience of contradiction. It is impossible I should have a true satisfaction in my dispositions and talents, or even any precise perceptions of virtue and vice, unless assisted by the concurrence of my fellows.

An impartial distribution of commendation and blame to the actions of men, would be the most operative incentive to virtue. But this distribution at present scarcely in any instance exists. One man is satirised with bitterness, and the misconduct of another treated with inordinate lenity. In speaking of our neighbours we are perpetually under the influence of sinister and unacknowledged motives. Every thing is disfigured and distorted. The basest hypocrite goes through the world with applause; and the purest character is loaded with unmerited aspersions. The benefactors of mankind are frequently the object of their bitterest hatred, and most unrelenting ingratitude. What encouragement then is afforded to virtue? Those who are smitten with the love of distinction, will rather seek it in external splendour and unmeaning luxury, than in moral attainments. While those who are led to benevolent pursuits by the purest motives, yet languish under the privation of that honour and esteem, which would give new energy to rectitude, and ardour to benevolence.

A genuine and unalterable sincerity would not fail to reverse the scene. Every idle or malignant tale now produces its effect, because men are unaccustomed to exercise their judgment upon the probabilities of human action, or to possess the materials of judgment. But then the rash assertions of one individual would be corrected by the maturer information of his neighbour. Exercised in discrimination, we should be little likely to be misled. The truth would be known, the whole truth and the unvarnished truth. This would be a trial that the most stubborn obliquity would be found unable to withstand. If a just and impartial character were awarded to all human actions, vice would be universally deserted, and virtue every where practised. Sincerity therefore, once introduced into the manners of mankind, would necessarily bring every other virtue in its train.

Men are now feeble in their temper, becauſe they are not accuſtomed to hear the truth. They lay their account in being perſonally treated with artificial delicacy, and expect us to abſtain from repeating what we know to their diſadvantage. But is this right? It has already appeared that plain dealing, truth ſpoken with kindneſs, but ſpoken with ſincerity, is the moſt wholeſome of all diſciplines. How then can we be juſtified in thus ſubverting the nature of things and the ſyſtem of the univerſe, in breeding a ſet of ſummer inſects, upon which the breeze of ſincerity may never blow, and the tempeſt of misfortune never beat?

In the third place, ſincerity is in an eminent degree calculated to conduce to our intellectual improvement. If from timidity of diſpoſition, or the danger that attends a diſcloſure, we ſuppreſs the reflections that occur to us, we ſhall neither add to, nor correct them. From the act of telling my thoughts I derive encouragement to proceed. Nothing can more powerfully conduce to perſpicuity than the very attempt to arrange and expreſs them. If they be received cordially by others, they derive from that circumſtance a peculiar firmneſs and conſiſtency. If they be received with oppoſition and diſtruſt, I am induced to reviſe them. I detect their errors; or I ſtrengthen my arguments, and add new truths to thoſe which I had previouſly accumulated. It is not by the ſolitary anchorite, who neither ſpeaks, nor hears, nor reads the genuine ſentiments of man, that the ſtock of human good is eminently increaſed. The period of bold and unreſtricted communication, is the period in which the materials of happineſs ferment and germinate. What can excite me to the purſuit of diſcovery, if I know that I am never to communicate my diſcoveries? It is in the nature of things impoſſible that the man, who has determined never to utter the truths he may be acquainted with, ſhould be an intrepid and indefatigable thinker. The link which binds together the inward

and the outward man is indiſſoluble, and he that is not bold in ſpeech, will never be ardent and unprejudiced in enquiry.

What is it that at this day enables a thouſand errors to keep their ſtation in the world; prieſtcraft, teſts, bribery, war, cabal, and whatever elſe excites the diſapprobation of the honeſt and enlightened mind? Cowardice; the timid reſerve which makes men ſhrink from telling what they know; and the inſidious policy that annexes perſecution and puniſhment to an unreſtrained and ſpirited diſcuſſion of the true intereſts of ſociety. Men either refrain from the publication of unpalatable opinions, becauſe they are unwilling to make a ſacrifice of all their worldly proſpects; or they publiſh them in a frigid and enigmatical ſpirit, ſtripped of their true character and incapable of their genuine operation. If every man to-day would tell all the truth he knew, it is impoſſible to predict how ſhort would be the reign of uſurpation and folly.

Laſtly, a ſtill additional benefit attendant on the practice of ſincerity, is good humour, kindneſs and benevolence. At preſent men meet together with the temper, leſs of friends, than enemies. Every man eyes his neighbour as if he expected to receive from him a ſecret wound. Every member of a poliſhed and civiliſed community goes armed. He knows many things of his aſſociate which he conceives himſelf obliged not to allude to in his hearing, but rather to put on an air of the profoundeſt ignorance. In the abſence of the perſon concerned, he ſcarcely knows how to mention his defects, however eſſential the advertiſement may be, leſt he ſhould finally incur the imputation of a calumniator. If he mention them, it is under the ſeal of ſecrecy. He ſpeaks of them with the ſentiments of a criminal, conſcious that what he is ſaying he would be unwilling to utter before the individual concerned. Perhaps he does not fully advert to this artificial character in himſelf; but he at leaſt

notes it with infallible observation in his neighbour. In youth, it may be, he accommodates himself with a pliant spirit to the manners of the world; and, while he loses no jot of his gaiety, learns from it no other lessons than those of selfishness and chearful indifference. Observant of the game that goes forward around him, he becomes skilful in his turn to elude the curiosity of others, and smiles inwardly at the false scent he prompts them to follow. Dead to the liberal emotions of a disinterested sympathy, he can calmly consider men as the mere neutral instruments of his enjoyments. He can preserve himself in a true equipoise between love and hatred. But this is a temporary character. The wanton wildness of youth at length subsides, and he is no longer contented to stand alone in the world. Anxious for the consolations of sympathy and frankness, he remarks the defects of mankind with a different spirit. He is seized with a shuddering at the sensation of their coldness. He can no longer tolerate their subterfuges and disguises. He searches in vain for an ingenious character, and loses patience at the eternal disappointment. The defect that he before regarded with indifferncе, he now considers as the consummation of the most damning vice. What wonder that under these circumstances moroseness, sourness and misanthropy become the ruling sentiments of so large a portion of mankind?

How exactly would the whole of this be reversed by the practice of sincerity? We could not be indifferent to men whose custom it was to tell us the truth. Hatred would perish from a failure in its principal ingredient.—No man could acquire a distant and unsympathetic temper. Reserve, duplicity and an artful exhibition of ourselves take from the human form its soul, and leave us the unanimated memento of what man might have been; of what he would have been, were not every impulse of the mind thus stunted and destroyed. If our emotions were not checked, we should be truly friends with

each other. Our character would expand: the luxury of indulging our feelings, and the exercise of uttering them, would raise us to the stature of men. I should not conceive alarm from my neighbour, because I should be conscious that I knew his genuine sentiments. I should not harbour bad passions and unsocial propensities, because the habit of expressing my thoughts would enable me to detect and dismiss them in the outset. Thus every man would be inured to the sentiment of love, and would find in his species objects worthy of his affection. Confidence is of all others the surest soil of mutual kindness.

The value of sincerity will be still farther illustrated by a brief consideration of the nature of insincerity. Viewed superficially and at a distance, we are easily reconciled, and are persuaded to have recourse to it upon the most trivial occasions. Did we examine it in detail, and call to mind its genuine history, the result could not fail to be different. Its features are neither like virtue, nor compatible with virtue. The sensations it obliges us to undergo are of the most odious nature. Its direct business is to cut off all commerce between the heart and the tongue. There are organs however of the human frame more difficult to be commanded than the mere syllables and sentiments we utter. We must be upon our guard, or our cheeks will be covered with a conscious blush, the awkwardness of our gestures will betray us, and our lips will falter with their unwonted task. Such is the issue of the first attempt, not merely of the liar, but of him who practises concealment, or whose object it is to put the change upon the person with whom he happens to converse. After a series of essays we become more expert. We are not, as at first, detected by the person from whom we intended to withhold what we knew; but we fear detection. We feel uncertainty and confusion; and it is with difficulty we convince ourselves

that we have escaped unsuspected. Is it thus a man ought to feel? At last perhaps we become consummate in hypocrisy, and feel the same confidence and alacrity in duplicity, that we before felt in entire frankness. Which, to an ordinary eye, would appear the man of virtue; he who by the depth of his hypocrisy contrived to keep his secret wholly unsuspected, or he who was precipitate enough to be thus misled, and to believe that his neighbour made use of words for the purpose of being understood?

But this is not all. It remains for the deceiver in the next place to maintain the delusion he has once imposed, and to take care that no unexpected occurrence shall betray him. It is upon this circumstance that the common observation is founded, "that one lie will always need a hundred others to justify and cover it." We cannot determine to keep anything secret, without risking to be involved in artifices, quibbles, equivocations and falshoods without number. The character of the virtuous man seems to be that of a firm and unalterable resolution, confident in his own integrity. But the character that results from insincerity, begins in hesitation, and ends in disgrace. Let us suppose that the imposition I practised is in danger of detection. Of course it will become my wisdom to calculate this danger, and, if it be too imminent, not to think of attempting any farther disguise. But, if the secret be important and the danger problematical, I shall probably persist. The whole extent of the danger can be known only by degrees. Suppose the person who questions me return to the charge, and affirm that he heard the fact, as it really was, but not as I represent it, from another. What am I now to do? Am I to asperse the character of the honest reporter, and at the same time, it may be, instead of establishing the delusion, only astonish my neighbour with my cool and intrepid effrontery?

What has already been adduced may assist us to de-

termine the species of sincerity which virtue prescribes, and which alone can be of great practical benefit to mankind. Sincerity may be considered as of three degrees. First, a man may conceive that he sufficiently preserves his veracity, if he take care never to utter any thing that cannot be explained into a consistency with truth. There is a plain distinction between this man, and him who makes no scruple of uttering the most palpable and direct falshoods. Or, secondly, it may happen that his delicacy shall not stop here, and he may resolve, not only to utter nothing that is litterally untrue, but also nothing which he knows or believes will be understood by the hearer in a sense that is untrue. This he may consider as amounting for the most part to an adequate discharge of his duty; and he may conceive that there is little mischief in the frequently suppressing information which it was in his power to supply. The third and highest degree of sincerity consists in the most perfect frankness, discards every species of concealment or reserve, and, as Cicero expresses it, "utters nothing that is false, and withholds nothing that is true."

The two first of these by no means answer the genuine purposes of sincerity. The former labours under one disadvantage more than direct falshood. It is of little consequence to the persons with whom I communicate, that I have a subterfuge by which I can to my own mind explain my deceit into a consistency with truth; while at the same time the study of such subterfuges is more adverse to courage and energy, than a conduct which unblushingly avows the laxity of its principles. The second of the degrees enumerated, which merely proposes to itself the avoiding every active deception, seems to be measured less by the standard of magnanimity than of personal prudence. If, as Rousseau has somewhere asserted *, "the great duty of man be to do no injury

* *Emile*, liv. ii.

to his neighbour," then this negative ſincerity may be of conſiderable account: but, if it be the higheſt and moſt indiſpenſable buſineſs of man to ſtudy and promote his neighbour's welfare, a virtue of this ſort will contribute little to ſo honourable an undertaking. If ſincerity be, as we have endeavoured to demonſtrate, the moſt powerful engine of human improvement, a ſcheme for reſtraining it within ſo narrow limits cannot be entitled to conſiderable applauſe. Add to this, that it is impoſſible in many caſes to ſuppreſs information without great maſtery in the arts of ambiguity and evaſion, and ſuch a perfect command of countenance as ſhall prevent it from being an index to our real ſentiments. Indeed the man who is frequently accuſtomed to ſeem ignorant of what he really knows, though he will eſcape the open diſgrace of him who is detected in direct falſhood or ambiguous impoſition, will yet be viewed by his neighbours with coldneſs and diſtruſt, and eſteemed an unfathomable and ſelfiſh character.

Hence it appears, that the only ſpecies of ſincerity which can in any degree prove ſatisfactory to the enlightened moraliſt and politician, is that where the frankneſs is perfect, and every degree of reſerve is diſcarded.

Nor is there any danger that ſuch a character ſhould degenerate into ruggedneſs and brutality. Sincerity, upon the principles on which it is here recommended, is practiſed from a conſciouſneſs of its utility, and from ſentiments of philanthropy. It will communicate frankneſs to the voice, fervour to the geſture, and kindneſs to the heart. Even in expoſtulation and cenſure, friendlineſs of intention and mildneſs of proceeding may be eminently conſpicious. There ſhould be no mixture of diſdain and ſuperiority. The intereſt of him who is corrected, not the triumph of the corrector, ſhould be the principle of action. True ſincerity will be attended with that equality which is

the only sure foundation of love, and that love which gives the best finishing and lustre to a sentiment of equality.

Appendix, No. I.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF SINCERITY.

Question proposed.—Erroneous maxims upon this head refuted.—General principles and theories estimated.—An injurious distinction exposed.—Limitations of sincerity.—Arguments, affirmative and negative.—Inference.—Conclusion.

THERE is an important enquiry which cannot fail to suggest itself in this place. "Universal sincerity has been shewn to be pregnant with unspeakable advantages. The enlightened friend of the human species cannot fail ardently to desire the time when each man shall speak truth with his neighbour. But what conduct does it behove us to observe in the interval? Are we to practise an unreserved and uniform sincerity, while the world about us acts upon so different a plan? If sincerity should ever become characteristic of the community in which we live, our neighbour will then be prepared to hear the truth, and to make use of the communication in a way that shall be manly, generous and just. But at present we shall be liable to waken the resentment of some, and to subject to a trial beyond its strength the fortitude of others. By a direct and ill-timed truth we may not only incur the forfeiture of our worldly prospects, but of our usefulness, and sometimes of our lives."

Ascetic and puritanical systems of morality have accustomed their votaries to give a short answer to these difficulties, by directing us "to do our duty, without regard to consequences, and uninfluenced by a consideration of what may be the conduct of others."

But these maxims will not pass unexamined with the man who considers morality as a subject of reasoning, and places its foundation in a principle of utility. "To do our duty without regard to consequences," is upon this principle a maxim completely absurd and self-contradictory. Morality is nothing else but a calculation of consequences, and an adoption of that mode of conduct which, upon the most comprehensive view, appears to be attended with a balance of general pleasure and happiness. Nor will the other part of the precept above stated appear upon examination to be less erroneous. There are many instances in which the selection of the conduct I should pursue, altogether depends upon a foresight of "what will be the conduct of others." To what purpose contribute my subscription to an object of public utility, a bridge, for example, or a canal, at a time when I certainly foreknow that the subscription will not be generally countenanced? Shall I go and complete such a portion of masonry upon the spot as, if all my neighbours would do the same, would effect the desired purpose, though I am convinced that no one beside myself will move a finger in the undertaking? There are various regulations respecting our habits of living, expenditure and attire, which, if generally adopted, would probably be of the highest benefit, which yet, if acted upon by a single individual, might be productive of nothing but injury. I cannot pretend to launch a ship or repel an army by myself, though either of these might be things, absolutely considered, highly proper to be done.

The duty of sincerity is one of those general principles which reflection and experience have enjoined upon us as conducive to the happiness of mankind. Let us enquire then into the nature and origin of general principles. Engaged, as men are in perpetual intercourse with their neighbours, and constantly liable to be called upon without the smallest previous notice, in cases where the interest of their fellows is deeply in-

volved, it is not possible for them upon all occasions to deduce through a chain of reasoning the judgment which should be followed. Hence the necessity of resting places for the mind, of deductions already stored in the memory, and prepared for application as circumstances may demand. We find this necessity equally urgent upon us in matters of science and abstraction, as in conduct and morals. Theory has also a farther use. It serves as a perpetual exercise and aliment to the understanding, and renders us competent and vigorous to judge in every situation that can occur. Nothing can be more idle and shallow than the competition which some men have set up between theory and practice. It is true that we can never predict from theory alone the success of any given experiment. It is true that no theory, accurately speaking, can possibly be practical. It is the business of theory to collect the circumstances of a certain set of cases, and arrange them. It would cease to be theory, if it did not leave out many circumstances; it collects such as are general, and leaves out such as are particular. In practice however those circumstances inevitably arise, which are necessarily omitted in the general process; they cause the phenomenon in various ways to include features which were not in the prediction, and to be diversified in those that were. Yet theory is of the highest use; and those who decry it may even be proved not to understand themselves. They do not mean that men should always act in a particular case without illustration from any other case, for that would be to deprive us of all understanding. The moment we begin to compare cases and infer, we begin to theorise; no two things in the universe were ever perfectly alike. The genuine exercise of man therefore is to theorise, for this is in other words to sharpen and improve his intellect; but not to become the slave of theory, or at any time to forget that it is by its very nature precluded from comprehending the whole of what claims our attention.

To apply this to the case of morals. General principles of morality are so far valuable, as they truly delineate the means of utility, pleasure or happiness. But every action of any human being has its appropriate result, and the more closely it is examined, the more truly will that result appear. General rules and theories are not infallible. It would be preposterous to suppose that, in order to judge fairly, and conduct myself properly, I ought only to look at a thing from a certain distance, and not consider it minutely. On the contrary, I ought, as far as lies in my power, to examine every thing upon its own grounds, and decide concerning it upon its own merits. To rest in general rules is sometimes a necessity which our imperfection imposes upon us, and sometimes the refuge of our indolence; but the true dignity of human reason is as much as we are able to go beyond them, to have our faculties in act upon every occasion that occurs, and to conduct ourselves accordingly.

There is an observation necessary to be made, to prevent any erroneous application of these reasonings. In the morality of every action two things are to be considered, the direct, and the remote consequences with which it is attended. There are numerous modes of proceeding which would be productive of immediate pleasure, that would have so ill an effect upon the permanent state of one or many individuals, as to render them in every rational estimate, objects, not of choice, but aversion. This is particularly the case in relation to that view of any action whereby it becomes a medium enabling the spectator to predict the nature of future actions. It is with the conduct of our fellow beings, as with the course of inanimate nature: if events did not succeed each other in a certain order, there could be neither judgment, nor wisdom, nor morality. Confidence in the order of the seasons and the progress of vegetation, encourages us to sow our field in expectation of a future harvest. Confidence in the cha-

racters of our fellow men, that they will for the moſt part be governed by the reaſon of the caſe, that they will neither rob, nor defraud, nor deceive us, is not leſs eſſential to the exiſtence of civiliſed ſociety. Hence ariſes a ſpecies of argument in favour of general rules not hitherto mentioned. The remote conſequences of an action, eſpecially as they relate to the fulfilling or not fulfilling the expectation excited, depend chiefly on general circumſtances, and not upon particulars; belong to the claſs, and not to the individual. But this makes no eſſential alteration in what was before delivered. It will ſtill be incumbent on us, when called into action, to eſtimate the nature of the particular caſe, that we may aſcertain where the urgency of ſpecial circumſtances is ſuch as to ſuperſede rules that are generally obligatory.

To return to the particular caſe of ſincerity. Sincerity and plain dealing are obviouſly in the majority of human actions the beſt policy, if we conſider only the intereſt of the individual, and extend our calculation of that intereſt only over a very ſhort period. No man will be wild enough to aſſert, even in this limited ſenſe, that it is ſeldomer our policy to ſpeak truth than to lie. Sincerity and plain dealing are eminently conducive to the intereſt of mankind at large, becauſe they afford that ground of confidence and reaſonable expectation which are eſſential both to wiſdom and virtue. Yet it may with propriety be aſked, "Whether caſes do not exiſt of peculiar emergency, where the general principle of ſincerity and ſpeaking the truth ought to be ſuperceded?"

Undoubtedly this is a queſtion to the treatment of which we ſhould advance with ſome degree of caution and delicacy. Yet it would be a ſtrange inſtance of inconſiſtency, that ſhould induce us, right or wrong, to recommend a univerſal frankneſs, from an apprehenſion of the abuſes which may follow from an oppoſite doctrine; and thus incur a charge of deception,

in the very act of perſuading our neighbours that deception is in no inſtance to be admitted.

Some perſons, from an extreme tenderneſs of countenancing any particle of inſincerity, at the ſame time that they felt the difficulty of recommending the oppoſite practice in every imaginable caſe, have thought proper to allege, "that it is not the propagation of truth, but of falſhood we have to fear; and that the whole againſt which we are bound to be upon our guard, is the telling truth in ſuch a manner as to produce the effect of falſhood."

This will perhaps be found upon examination to be an injudicious and miſchievous diſtinction. In the firſt place, it is of great benefit to the cauſe of morality that things ſhould be called by their right names, without varniſh or ſubterfuge. I am either to tell the ſimple and obvious truth, or I am not; I am to ſuppreſs, or I am not to ſuppreſs: this is the alternative upon which the preſent queſtion calls us to decide. If ſuppreſſion, concealment, or falſhood can in any caſe be my duty, let it be known to be ſuch; I ſhall at leaſt have this advantage, I ſhall be aware that it can only be my duty in ſome extraordinary emergence. Secondly, whatever reaſon can be aſſigned for my not communicating the truth in the form in which it originally ſuggeſts itſelf to my mind, muſt, if it be a good reaſon, ultimately reſolve itſelf into a reaſon of utility. Sincerity itſelf is a duty only for reaſons of utility; it ſeems abſurd therefore, if in any caſe truth is not to be communicated in its moſt obvious form, to ſeek for the reaſon rather in the ſecondary principle of ſincerity, than in the paramount and original principle of general utility. Laſtly, this diſtinction is of a nature that ſeems to deſerve that we ſhould regard it with a watchful and jealous eye, on account of its vague and indefinite application. If the queſtion were reſpecting the mode of my communicating truth, there could not perhaps be a better maxim, than that I ſhould

take care so to communicate it, that it might have the effects of truth and not of falshood. But, it will be extremely dangerous, if I accustom myself to make this the test whether I shall communicate it or no. It is a maxim that seems exactly fitted to fall in with that indolence and want of enterprise which in some degree or other are characteristic of all human minds. Add to which, it is a maxim which may be applied without the possibility of limitation. There is no instance in which truth can be communicated absolutely pure. We can only make approximations to such a proceeding, without ever being able fully to arrive at it. It will be liable to some misconstruction, to some want of clearness and precision, to the exciting some passions that ought to lie for ever dormant. This maxim therefore will either prove too much, or is one to which no recourse must be had but after such an investigation of the capacities of the human mind in each individual instance, as to make the idea of introducing a general maxim by way of compendium ridiculous.

Having cleared the subject of those ambiguities in which it has sometimes been involved, let us proceed to the investigation of the original question; and for this purpose it may be useful to take up the subject a little higher, and recur to the basis of moral obligation.

All just reasoning in subjects of morality has been found to depend upon this as its fundamental principle, that each man is bound to consider himself as a debtor in all his faculties, his opportunities and his industry to the general welfare. This is a debt which must be always paying, never discharged. Every moment of my life can be better employed, or it cannot; if it cannot, I am in that very instance, however seemingly inconsiderable, playing the part of a true patriot of human kind; if it can, I then inevitably incur some portion of delinquency. Considering the subject in this point of view, there are two

articles which will always ſtand among the leading principles of moral deciſion, the good to reſult from the action immediately propoſed, and the advantage to the public of my preſerving in exiſtence and vigour the means of future uſefulneſs. Every man, ſufficiently impreſſed with a ſenſe of his debt to the ſpecies, will feel himſelf obliged to ſcruple the laying out his entire ſtrength and forfeiting his life, upon any ſingle inſtance of public exertion. There is a certain proceeding which in itſelf conſidered I ought this day to adopt; change the circumſtances, and make it unqueſtionable that, if adopted, my life will be the forfeit, will that make no change in my duty? This is a queſtion which has been previouſly anticipated *.

In the mean time to render the deciſion in the ſubject before us ſtill more ſatisfactory, let us ſuppoſe a caſe in which the uttering a falſhood ſhall be the only means by which I can eſcape from a menace of inſtant deſtruction. Let it be that, which is ſaid to have occurred in the war of la Vendée in 1793, where the royaliſts ordered one of their priſoners at the point of the bayonet to cry *Vive le roi*, while he, inſtead of complying, exclaimed *Vive la republique*, and immediately periſhed covered with a hundred wounds. Was his conduct under theſe circumſtances commendable and juſt? Ought he, according to the pureſt principles of morality, to have acted as he did, or otherwiſe? Strict ſincerity required that he ſhould adopt the conduct which led to the immediate forfeiture of his life. Let us ſtate the ſeveral arguments that offer themſelves on both ſides of this queſtion.

The advantages affirmed of ſincerity in general will be found equally to hold in this inſtance. All falſhood has a tendency to enervate the individual that practiſes it. With what ſentiments of mind is he to utter the falſhood in queſtion? Shall he endeavour to render it

* *Book* II, *Chap.* VI. *Book* III, *Chap.* VI.

complete and effectually to mislead the persons to whom it relates? This will require a systematical hypocrisy, and an incessant watchfulness lest his features and gestures should prove so many vehicles of his real opinion. Shall he comply with the requisition in the pure spirit of formality, rather implying that he does not think it advisable directly to shock their prejudices, than that he has any anxious desire to impose the thing that is not? It may happen that this indolent compliance will not suffice to avert the danger with which he is threatened. But, if it do, then what he is openly assuming is to play a feeble and imbecil character, destitute of that energy, firmness and decision which are the only qualities worthy of a man. It must be a calamitous state of human action which imposes so despicable an alternative. Add to this, that by such a conduct he is contributing his part to the cutting off the intercourse between men's tongues and their sentiments, infusing general distrust, and trifling with the most sacred pledge of human integrity. To affirm that I am of one opinion, when in reality I am of another, is an action from which the human mind unconquerably revolts. To avow the truth with a fearless disregard of consequences, has something in it so liberal and magnanimous, as to produce a responsive feeling in every human heart. Nor is it to be forgotten that the threatened consequences can scarcely in any instance be regarded as certain. The intrepidity of his behaviour, the sobriety and dignified moderation of his carriage, and the reasonableness of his expostulations, may be such a to disarm the bitterest foe.

Let us consider the arguments on the other side of the question. And here it may be observed, that there is nothing really humiliating in the discharge of our duty. If it can be shown that compliance in the instance described is that which it is incumbent to yield, then without doubt we ought to feel self-approbation and not censure in the yielding it. There are many duties which the habits of the world make us

feel it humiliating to discharge, as well as many vices in which we pride ourselves; but this is the result of prejudice, and ought to be corrected. Whatever it be that our duty requires of us, the man who is sufficiently enlightened will feel no repugnance to the performance. As to the influence of our conduct upon other men, no doubt, so far as relates to example, we ought to set an example, of virtue, of real virtue, not of that which is merely specious. It will also frequently happen in cases such as that above described, that the memory of what we do will be entirely lost; our proceeding is addressed to prejudiced persons, who will admit no virtue in the man they hate or despise. Is it probable that the effect of my virtue in la Vendée will be more extensively beneficial to society, than all my future life, however industrious and however pure? Cases might easily have been put of private animosity, where my generous self-devotion would scarcely in any instance be heard of. No mistake can be more painful to an impartial observer, than to see an individual of great utility irretrievably thrown away upon a trivial adventure. It may also be worth remarking, that the most virtuous man that lives, is probably guilty of some acts of insincerity in every day of his life. Though therefore he ought to be careful not lightly to add to the catalogue yet surely there is someting extremely contrary to reason in finding the same man deviating from a general rule of conduct for the most trifling and contemptible motives, and immediately after repelling an additional deviation at the expence of his life. As to the argument drawn from the uncertainty of the threatened consequences, it must be remembered that some degree of this uncertainty adheres to all human affairs; and that all calculation of consequences, or in other words all virtue, depends upon our adopting the greater probability and rejecting the less.

No doubt considerable sacrifices (not only of the imbecility of our character, which ought in all instances

to be ſacrificed without mercy, but) of the real advantage of life, ought to be made, for the ſake of preſerving with ourſelves and others a confidence in our veracity. He who, being ſentenced by a court of judicature for ſome action that he eſteems laudable, is offered the remiſſion of his ſentence provided he will recant his virtue, ought probably in every imaginable caſe to reſiſt the propoſal. Much ſeems to depend upon the formality and notoriety of the action. It may probably be wrong to be minutely ſcrupulous with a drunken bigot in a corner, who ſhould require of me an aſſent to his creed with a piſtol at my breaſt; and right peremptory to refuſe all terms of qualification, when ſolemnly propoſed by a court of judicature in the face of a nation.

If there be caſes where I ought not to ſcruple to violate the truth ſince the alternative conſiſts in my certain deſtruction, it is at leaſt as much incumbent on me when the life of my neighbour is at ſtake. Indeed, the moment any exception is admitted to the general principle of unreſerved ſincerity, it becomes obviouſly impoſſible to fix the nature of all the exceptions. The rule reſpecting them muſt be, that, wherever a great and manifeſt evil ariſes from diſcloſing the truth, and that evil appears to be greater than the evil to ariſe from violating in this inſtance the general barrier of human confidence and virtue, there the obligation of ſincerity is ſuſpended.

Nor is it a valid objection to ſay, "that by ſuch a rule we are making every man a judge in his own caſe." In the courts of morality it cannot be otherwiſe; a pure and juſt ſyſtem of thinking admits not of the exiſtence of any infallible judge to whom we can appeal. It might indeed be farther objected, "that by this rule men will be called upon to judge in the moment of paſſion and partiality, inſtead of being referred to the paſt deciſions of their cooler reaſon." But this alſo is an inconvenience inſepa-

rable from human affairs. We muſt and ought to keep ourſelves open to the laſt moment to the influence of ſuch conſiderations as may appear worthy to influence us. To teach men that they muſt not truſt their own underſtandings, is not the beſt ſcheme for rendering them virtuous and conſiſtent. On the contrary, to inure them to conſult their underſtanding, is the way to render it worthy of becoming their director and guide.

Nothing which has been alleged under this head of exceptions, produces the ſmalleſt alteration in what was offered under the general diſcuſſion. All the advantages, the ſublime and illuſtrious effects, which attend upon an ingenuous conduct, remain unimpeached. Sincerity, a generous and intrepid frankneſs, will ſtill be found to occupy perhaps the firſt place in the catalogue of human virtues. This is the temper that ought to pervade the whole courſe of our reflections and actions. It ſhould be acted upon every day, and confirmed in us every night. There is nothing which we ought to reject with more unalterable firmneſs than an action that by its conſequences reduces us to the neceſſity of duplicity and concealment. No man can be eminently either reſpectable, or amiable, or uſeful, who is not diſtinguiſhed for the frankneſs and candour of his manners. This is the grand faſcination by which we lay hold of the hearts of our neighbours, conciliate their attention, and render virtue an irreſiſtible object of imitation. He that is not conſpicuouſly ſincere, either very little partakes of the paſſion of doing good, or is pitiably ignorant of the means by which the objects of true benevolence are to be effected.

Appendix, No. II.

OF THE MODE OF EXCLUDING VISITORS.

Its impropriety argued.—Pretended neceſſity of this practice, 1. *to preſerve us from intruſion*—2. *to free us from diſagreeable acquaintance.*

THIS principle reſpecting the obſervation of truth in the common intercourſes of life, cannot perhaps be better illuſtrated than from the familiar and trival caſe, as it is commonly ſuppoſed, of a maſter directing his ſervant to ſay he is not at home. No queſtion of morality can be foreign to the ſcience of politics; nor will thoſe few pages of the preſent work be found perhaps the leaſt valuable, which here and in other places * are dedicated to the refutation of thoſe errors in private individuals, that by their extenſive ſway have perverted the foundation of moral and political juſtice. Not to mention that ſuch ſpeculations may afford an amuſement and relief, in the midſt of diſcuſſions of a more comprehenſive and abſtracted character.

Let us then, according to the well known axiom of morality, put ourſelves in the place of the man upon whom is impoſed this ungracious taſk. Is there any of us that would be contented to perform it in perſon, and to ſay that our father or our brother was not at home, when they were really in the houſe? Should we not feel ourſelves contaminated with the plebeian lie? Can we then be juſtified in requiring that from another, which we ſhould ſhrink from as an act of diſhonour in ourſelves?

Whatever ſophiſtry we may employ to excuſe our proceeding, certain it is that the ſervant underſtands the leſſon we teach him to be a lie. It is ac-

* *Vide Appendices to Book* II, *Chap.* II.

companied by all the retinue of falſhood. Before it can be ſkilfully practiſed, he muſt be no mean proficient in hypocriſy. By the eaſy impudence with which it is uttered, he beſt anſwers the purpoſe of his maſter, or in other words the purpoſe of deceit. By the ſame means he ſtifles the upbraidings of his own mind, and conceals the ſhame impoſed on him. Before this can be ſufficiently done, he muſt have diſcarded all frankneſs of ſpeech, and all ingenuouſneſs of countenance. When he has learned this degenerate leſſon in one inſtance, who will undertake that it ſhall produce no unfavourable effects upon his general conduct?

But it is ſaid, "This lie is neceſſary, and the intercourſe of human ſociety cannot be carried on without it. My friend may viſit me at a time when it would be exceedingly inconvenient to me to ſee him; and this practice affords a fortunate alternative, between my ſubmitting to have all my occupations at the mercy of any accidental viſitor on the one hand, and my offending him with a rude denial on the other."

But let us aſk from what cauſe it is that truth upon the ſimpleſt occaſion ſhould be ſo offenſive to our delicacy, and that falſhood ſhould be requiſite to ſooth us? He muſt in reality be the weakeſt of mankind who ſhould conceive umbrage at a plain anſwer in this caſe, when he was informed of the moral conſiderations that induced me to employ it. In fact we are conſcious of caprice in our mode of deciding reſpecting our viſitors, and are willing to ſhelter our folly under this ſort of irreſponſibility. Would it be worthy of regret, if we compelled ourſelves to part with this refuge for our imbecility, and to do nothing which we were aſhamed to be known to do?

A farther argument which has been urged in favour of this diſingenuous practice, is that "there is no other way by which we can free ourſelves from diſ-

agreeable acquaintance." Thus it is one of the perpetual effects of polished society, to persuade us that we are incapable of doing the most trivial offices for ourselves. It would be as reasonable to tell me, "that it is a matter of indespensable necessity to have a valet to put on my stockings." If there be in the list of our acquaintance any person whom we particularly dislike, it usually happens that it is for some moral fault that we perceive or think we perceive in him. Why should he be kept in ignorance of our opinion respecting him, and prevented from the opportunity either of amendment or vindication? If he be too wise or too foolish, too virtuous or too vicious for us, why should he not be ingenuously told of his mistake in his intended kindness to us, rather than suffered to find it out by six months enquiry from our servants? If we practised no deceit, if we assumed no atom of cordiality and esteem we did not feel, we should be little pestered with these buzzing intruders. But one species of falshood involves us in another; and he, that pleads for these lying answers to our visitors, in reality pleads the cause of a cowardice, that dares not deny to vice the distinction and kindness that are exclusively due to virtue.

CHAP. VII.

OF FREE WILL AND NECESSITY.

Second part of the present book.—Definition of necessity.—Why supposed to exist in the operations of the material universe.—The case of the operations of mind is parallel.—Indications of necessity—in history—in our judgments of character—in our schemes of policy—in our ideas of moral discipline.—Objection from the fallibility of our expectations in human conduct.—Answer.—Origin and universality of the sentiment of free will.—The sentiment of necessity also universal.—The truth of this sentiment argued from the nature of volition.—Hypothesis of free will examined.—Self-determination.—Indifference.—The will not a distinct faculty.—Free will disadvantageous to its possessor.—Of no service to morality.

THUS we have engaged in the discussion of various topics, respecting the mode in which improvement may most successfully be introduced into the institutions of society. We have seen under the heads of resistance, revolution, associations and tyrannicide, that nothing is more to be deprecated than violence and a headlong zeal, that every thing may be trusted to the tranquil and wholsome progress of knowledge, and that the office of the enlightened friend of political justice for the most part consists in this only, a vigilant and perpetual endeavour to assist the progress. We have traced the effects which are to be produced by the cultivation of truth and the practice of sincerity. It remains to turn our attention to the other branch of the subject proposed to be investigated in the present book; the mode in which, from the structure of the human mind, opinion is found to operate is modifying the conduct of individuals.

Some progreſs was made in the examination of this point in an earlier diviſion of the preſent work *. An attentive enquirer will readily perceive, that no inveſtigation can be more material, to ſuch as would engage in a careful developement of the principles of political juſtice. It cannot therefore be unproductive of benefit, that we ſhould here trace into their remoter ramifications the principles which were then delivered; as well as turn our attention to certain other conſiderations connected with the ſame topic, which we have not hitherto had occaſion to diſcuſs. Of the many controverſies which have been excited relative to the operation of opinion, none are of more importance than the queſtion reſpecting free will and neceſſity, and the queſtion reſpecting ſelf-love and benevolence. Theſe will occupy a principal portion of the enquiry †.

We will firſt endeavour to eſtabliſh the propoſition that all the actions of men are neceſſary. It was impoſſible that this principle ſhould not, in an indirect manner, be frequently anticipated in the preceding parts of this work. But it will be found ſtrongly entitled to a ſeparate conſideration. The doctrine of moral neceſſity includes in it conſequences of the higheſt moment, and leads to a more bold and comprehenſive view of man in ſociety, than can poſſibly be entertained by him who has embraced the oppoſite opinion.

To the right underſtanding of any arguments that may be adduced under this head it is requiſite, that we ſhould have a clear idea of the meaning of the term neceſſity. He who affirms that all actions

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* *Book* I, *Chap.* V.

† *The reader, who is indiſpoſed to abſtruſe ſpeculations, will find the other members of the treatiſe ſufficiently connected, without an expreſs reference to the remaining part of the preſent book.*

are neceſſary, means, that if we form a juſt and complete view of all the circumſtances in which a living or intelligent being is placed, we ſhall find that he could not in any moment of his exiſtence have acted otherwiſe than he has acted. According to this aſſertion there is in the tranſactions of mind nothing looſe, precarious and uncertain. Upon this queſtion the advocate of liberty in the philoſophical ſenſe, muſt join iſſue. He muſt, if he mean any thing, deny this certainty of conjunction between moral antecedents and conſequents. Where all is conſtant and invariable, and the events that ariſe uniformly flow from the circumſtances in which they originate, there can be no liberty.

It is generally acknowledged that in the events of the material univerſe every thing is ſubjected to this neceſſity. The tendency of inveſtigation and enquiry relatively to this topic of human ſcience has been, more effectually to exclude chance, as our improvements extended. Let us conſider what is the ſpecies of evidence that has ſatisfied philoſophers upon this point. Their only ſolid ground of reaſoning has been from experience. The argument which has induced mankind to conceive the univerſe as governed by certain laws, and to entertain the idea of neceſſary connection between ſucceſſive events, has been an obſerved ſimilarity in the order of ſucceſſion. If, when we had once remarked two events ſucceeding each other, we had never, had occaſion to ſee that individual ſucceſſion repeated; if we ſaw innumerable events in perpetual progreſſion without any apparent order, ſo that all our obſervation would not enable us, when we beheld one, to pronounce that another of ſuch a particular claſs might be expected to follow; we ſhould never have conceived the exiſtence of neceſſary connection, or have had an idea correſponding to the term cauſe.

Hence it follows that all that, ſtrictly ſpeaking, we know of the material univerſe is this ſucceſſion of events.

Uniform ſucceſſion irreſiſtibly forces upon the mind the idea of abſtract connection. When we ſee the ſun conſtantly riſe in the morning and ſet at night, and have had occaſion to obſerve this phenomenon invariably taking place through the whole period of our exiſtence, we cannot avoid believing that there is ſome cauſe producing this uniformity of event. But the principle or virtue by which one event is conjoined to another we never ſee.

Let us take ſome familiar illuſtrations of this truth. Can it be imagined that any man by the inſpection and analyſis of gunpowder would have been enabled, previouſly to experience, to predict its exploſion? Would he previouſly to experience have been enabled to predict, that one piece of marble having a flat and poliſhed ſurface might with facility be protruded along another in a horizontal, but would with conſiderable pertinacity reſiſt ſeparation in a perpendicular direction? The ſimpleſt phenomena, of the moſt hourly occurrence, were originally placed at an equal diſtance from human ſagacity.

There is a certain degree of obſcurity incident to this ſubject ariſing from the following circumſtance. All human knowledge is the reſult of perception. We know nothing of any ſubſtance but by experience. If it produced no effects, it would be no ſubject of human intelligence. We collect a number of theſe effects, and, having, by their perceived uniformity, reduced them into claſſes, form a general idea annexed to the ſubject that produces them. It muſt be admitted, that a definition of any ſubſtance, that is, any thing that deſerves to be called knowledge reſpecting it, will enable us to predict ſome of its future poſſible effects, and that for this plain reaſon, that definition is prediction under another name. But though, when we have gained the idea of impenetrability as a general phenomenon of matter, we can predict ſome of its effects, there are others which we cannot predict; or in other words, we know none of its effects but ſuch as

we have actually remarked, added to an expectation that similar events will arise under similar circumstances, proportioned to the constancy with which they have been observed to take place in our past experience. Finding, as we do by repeated experiments, that material substances have the property of resistance, and that one substance in a state of rest, when impelled by another, passes into a state of motion, we are still in want of more particular observation to enable us to predict the specific effects that will follow from this impulse in each of the bodies. Enquire of a man who knows nothing more of matter than its general property of impenetrability, what will be the result of one ball of matter impinging upon another, and you will soon find how little this general property can inform him of the particular laws of motion. We suppose him to know that it will communicate motion to the second ball. But what quantity of motion will it communicate. What effects will the impulse produce upon the impelling ball? Will it continue to move in the same direction? Will it recoil in the opposite direction? Will it fly off obliquely, or will it subside into a state of rest? All these events will appear equally probable to him whom a series of observations upon the past, has not instructed as to what he is to expect from the future.

From these remarks we may sufficiently collect what is the species of knowledge we possess respecting the laws of the material universe. No experiments we are able to make, no reasonings we are able to deduce, can ever instruct us in the principal of causation, or show us for what reason it is that one event has, in every instance in which it has been known to occur, been the precursor of another event of a given description. Yet we reasonably believe that these events are bound together by a perfect necessity, and exclude from our ideas of matter and motion the supposition of chance or an uncaused event. Association of ideas obliges us, after having seen

two events perpetually conjoined, to pass, as soon as one of them occurs, to the recollection of the other: and, in cases where this transition never misleads us, but the ideal succession is always found to be an exact copy of the future event, it is impossible that this species of foresight should not be converted into a general foundation of reasoning. We cannot take a single step upon this subject, which does not partake of the species of operation we denominate abstraction. Till we have been led to consider the rising of the sun to-morrow as an incident of the same species as its rising to-day, we cannot deduce from it similar consequences. It is the business of science to carry this task of generalisation to its farthest extent, and to reduce the diversified events of the universe to a small number of original principles.

Let us proceed to apply these reasonings concerning matter to the illustration of the theory of mind. Is it possible in this latter theory, as in the former subject, to discover any general principles? Can intellect be made a topic of science? Are we able to reduce the multiplied phenomena of mind to any certain standard of reasoning? If the affirmative of these questions be conceded, the inevitable consequence appears to be, that mind, as well as matter, exhibits a constant conjunction of events, and affords a reasonable presumption to the necessary connection of those events. It is of no importance that we cannot see the ground of that connection, or imagine how propositions and reasoning, when presented to the mind of a percipient being, are able by necessary consequence to generate volition and animal motion; for, if there be any truth in the above reasonings, we are equally incapable of perceiving the ground of connection between any two events in the material universe, the common and received opinion that we do perceive such ground of connection being in reality nothing more than a vulgar prejudice.

That mind is a topic of science may be argued

from all thoſe branches of literature and enquiry which have mind for their ſubject. What ſpecies of amuſement or inſtruction would hiſtory afford us, if there were no ground of inference from moral cauſes to effects, if certain temptations and inducements did not in all ages and climates produce a certain ſeries of actions, if we were unable to trace connection and a principle of unity in men's tempers, propenſities and tranſactions? The amuſement would be inferior to that which we derive from the peruſal of a chronological table, where events have no order but that of time; ſince, however the chronologiſt may neglect to mark the internal connection between ſucceſſive tranſactions, the mind of the reader is buſied in ſupplying that connection from memory or imagination: but the very idea of ſuch connection would never have ſuggeſted itſelf, if we had never found the ſource of that idea in experience. The inſtruction ariſing from the peruſal of hiſtory would be abſolutely none; ſince inſtruction implies in its very nature the claſſing and generaliſing of objects. But, upon the ſuppoſition on which we are arguing, all objects would be unconnected and disjunct, without the poſſibility of affording any grounds of reaſoning or principles of ſcience.

The idea correſpondent to the term character inevitably includes in it the aſſumption of neceſſary connection. The character of any man is the reſult of a long ſeries of impreſſions communicated to his mind, and modifying it in a certain manner, ſo as to enable us, a number of theſe modifications and impreſſions being given, to predict his conduct. Hence ariſe his temper and habits, reſpecting which we reaſonably conclude, that they will not be abruptly ſuperſeded and reverſed; and that, if they ever be reverſed, it will not be accidentally, but in conſequence of ſome ſtrong reaſon perſuading, or ſome extraordinary event modifying his mind. If

there were not this original and essential connection between motives and actions, and, which forms one particular branch of this principle, between men's past and future actions, there could be no such thing as character, or as a ground of inference enabling us to predict what men would be from what they have been.

From the same idea of necessary connection arise all the schemes of policy, in consequence of which men propose to themselves by a certain plan of conduct to prevail upon others to become the tools and instruments of their purposes. All the arts of courtship and flattery, of playing upon men's hopes and fears, proceed upon the supposition that mind is subject to certain laws, and that, provided we be skilful and assiduous enough in applying the cause, the effect will inevitably follow.

Lastly, the idea of moral discipline proceeds entirely upon this principle. If I carefully persuade, exhort, and exhibit motives to another, it is because I believe that motives have a tendency to influence his conduct. If I reward or punish him, either with a view to his own improvement or as an example to others, it is because I have been led to believe that rewards and punishments are calculated in their own nature to affect the sentiments and practices of mankind.

There is but one conceivable objection against the inference from these premises to the necessity of human actions. It may be alleged, that "though there is a real connection between motives and actions, yet this connection may not amount to a certainty, and of consequence the mind still retains an inherent activity by which it can at pleasure dissolve this connection. Thus for example, when I address argument and persuasion to my neighbour to induce him to adopt a certain species of conduct, I do it not with a certain expectation of success, and am not utterly disappointed if my efforts fail of their effect. I make a reserve for a certain faculty of liberty he is supposed to possess,

which may at last counteract the best digested projects."

But in this objection there is nothing peculiar to the case of mind. It is just so in matter. I see a part only of the premises, and therefore can pronounce only with uncertainty upon the conclusion. A philosophical experiment, which has succeeded a hundred times, may altogether fail in the next trial. But what does the philosopher conclude from this? Not that there is a liberty of choice in his retort and his materials, by which they baffle the best formed expectations. Not that the connection between effects and causes is imperfect, and that part of the effect happens without a cause. But that there was some other cause concerned, whose operation he did not perceive, but which a fresh investigation will probably lay open to him. When the science of the material universe was in its infancy, men were sufficiently prompt to refer events to accident and chance; but the farther they have extended their enquiries and observation, the more reason they have found to conclude that every thing takes place according to necessary and universal laws.

The case is exactly parallel with respect to mind. The politician and the philosopher, however they may speculatively entertain the opinion of free will, never think of introducing it into their scheme of accounting for events. If an incident turn out otherwise than they expected, they take it for granted, that there was some unobserved bias, some habit of thinking, some prejudice of education, some singular association of ideas, that disapointed their prediction; and, if they be of an active and enterprising temper, they return, like the natural philosopher, to search out the secret spring of this unlooked for event.

The reflections into which we have entered upon the doctrine of causes, not only afford us a simple and impressive argument in favour of the doctrine of necessity, but suggest a very obvious reason why the doctrine opposite to this has been in a certain degree

the general opinion of mankind. It has appeared that the idea of neceſſary connection between events of any ſort is the leſſon of experience, and the vulgar never arrive at the univerſal application of this principle even to the phenomena of the material univerſe. In the eaſieſt and moſt familiar inſtances, ſuch as the impinging of one ball of matter upon another and its conſequences, they willingly admit the interference of chance, or an event uncauſed. In this inſtance however, as both the impulſe and its effects are ſubjects of obſervation to the ſenſes, they readily imagine that they perceive the abſolute principle which cauſes motion to be communicated from the firſt ball to the ſecond. Now the very ſame prejudice and precipitate concluſion, which induce them to believe that they diſcover the principle of motion in objects of ſenſe, act in an oppoſite direction with reſpect to ſuch objects as cannot be ſubjected to the examination of ſenſe. The manner in which an idea or propoſition ſuggeſted to the mind of a percipient being produces animal motion they never ſee; and therefore readily conclude that there is no neceſſary connection between theſe events.

But, if the vulgar will univerſally be found to be the advocates of free will, they are not leſs ſtrongly, however inconſiſtently, impreſſed with the belief of the doctrine of neceſſity. It is a well known and a juſt obſervation, that, were it not for the exiſtence of general laws to which the events of the material univerſe always conform, man could never have been either a reaſoning or a moral being. The moſt conſiderable actions of our lives are directed by foreſight. It is becauſe he foreſees the regular ſucceſſion of the ſeaſons, that the farmer ſows his field, and after the expiration of a certain term expects a crop. There would be no kindneſs in my adminiſtering food to the hungry, and no injuſtice in my thruſting a drawn ſword againſt the boſom of my friend, if it were not the

eſtabliſhed quality of food to nouriſh, and of a ſword to wound.

But the regularity of events in the material univerſe will not of itſelf afford a ſufficient foundation of morality and prudence. The voluntary conduct of our neighbours enters for a ſhare, into almoſt all thoſe calculations upon which our plans and determinations are founded. If voluntary conduct, as well as material impulſe, were not ſubjected to general laws, included in the ſyſtem of cauſe and effect, and a legitimate topic of prediction and foreſight, the certainty of events in the material univerſe would be productive of little benefit. But in reality the mind paſſes from one of theſe topics of ſpeculation to the other, without accurately diſtributing them into claſſes, or imagining that there is any difference in the certainty with which they are attended. Hence it appears that the moſt uninſtructed peaſant or artiſan is practically a neceſſarian. The farmer calculates as ſecurely upon the inclination of mankind to buy his corn when it is brought into the market, as upon the tendency of the ſeaſons to ripen it. The labourer no more ſuſpects that his employer will alter his mind and not pay him his daily wages, than he ſuſpects that his tools will refuſe to perform thoſe functions to-day, in which they were yeſterday employed with ſucceſs*.

Another argument in favour of the doctrine of neceſſity, not leſs clear and irreſiſtible than that from the conſideration of cauſe and effect, will ariſe from a reference to the nature of voluntary action. The motions of the animal ſyſtem diſtribute themſelves into two great claſſes, voluntary and involuntary. "Voluntary action," as we formerly obſerved †, "is,

* *The reader will find the ſubſtance of the above arguments in a more diffuſive form, in Hume's Enquiry concerning Human Underſtanding, being the third part of his Eſſays.*

† *Book* I, *Chap.* V, *p.* 62.

where the event is foreſeen previouſly to its occurrence, and the idea of certain conſequences to reſult is the occaſion or cauſe to which the action is indebted for its exiſtence."

Here then the advocates of intellectual liberty have a clear dilemma propoſed to their choice. They muſt aſcribe this freedom, this imperfect connection of effects and cauſes, either to our voluntary or our involuntary actions. They have already made their determination. They are aware that to aſcribe freedom to that which is involuntary, even if the aſſumption could be maintained, would be altogether foreign to the great ſubjects of moral, theological or political enquiry. Man would not be in any degree more an agent or an accountable being, though it could be proved that all his involuntary motions ſprung up in a fortuitous and capricious manner.

But on the other hand to aſcribe freedom to our voluntary actions is an expreſs contradiction in terms. No motion is voluntary any farther than it is accompanied with intention and deſign, and flows from the apprehenſion of an end to be accompliſhed. So far as it flows in any degree from another ſource, it is involuntary. The new-born infant foreſees nothing, therefore all his motions are involuntary. A perſon arrived at maturity takes an extenſive ſurvey of the conſequences of his actions, therefore he is eminently a voluntary and rational being. If any part of my conduct be deſtitute of all foreſight of the effects to reſult, who is there that aſcribes to it depravity and vice? Xerxes acted juſt as ſoberly as ſuch a reaſoner, when he cauſed his attendants to inflict a thouſand laſhes on the waves of the Helleſpont.

The truth of the doctrine of neceſſity will be ſtill more evident, if we conſider the abſurdity of the oppoſite hypotheſis. One of its principal ingredients is ſelf-determination. Liberty, in an imperfect and popular ſenſe, is aſcribed to the motions of the animal ſyſtem, when they reſult from the foreſight and de-

liberation of the intellect, and not from external compulsion. It is in this sense that the word is commonly used in moral and political reasoning. Philosophical reasoners therefore, who have desired to vindicate the property of freedom, not only to our external motions, but to the acts of the mind, have been obliged to repeat this process. Our external actions are then said to be free, when they truly result from the determination of the mind. If our volitions, or internal acts be also free, they must in like manner result from the determination of the mind, or, in other words, "the mind in adopting them" must be "self-determined." Now nothing can be more evident than that that in which the mind exercises its freedom, must be an act of the mind. Liberty therefore according to this hypothesis consists in this, that every choice we make has been chosen by us, and every act of the mind been preceded and produced by an act of the mind. This is so true, that in reality the ultimate act is not styled free from any quality of its own, but because the mind in adopting it was self-determined, that is, because it was preceded by another act. The ultimate act resulted completely from the determination that was its precursor. It was itself necessary; and, if we would look for freedom, it must be in the preceding act. But in that preceding act also, if the mind were free, it was self-determined, that is, this volition was chosen by a preceding volition, and by the same reasoning this also by another antecedent to itself. All the acts, except the first, were necessary, and followed each other as inevitably as the links of a chain do, when the first link is drawn forward. But then neither was this first act free, unless the mind in adopting it were self-determined, that is, unless this act were chosen by a preceding act. Trace back the chain as far as you please, every act at which you arrive is necessary. That act, which gives the character of freedom to the whole, can never be discovered;

and, if it could, in its own nature includes a contradiction.

Another idea which belongs to the hypothesis of free will, is, that the mind is not necessarily inclined this way or that by the motives which are presented to it, by the clearness or obscurity with which they are apprehended, or by the temper and character which preceding habits may have generated; but that by its inherent activity it is equally capable of proceeding either way and passes to its determination from a previous state of absolute indifference. Now what sort of activity is that which is equally inclined to all kinds of actions? Let us suppose a particle of matter endowed with an inherent propensity to motion. This propensity must either be to move in one particular direction, and then it must for ever move in that direction unless counteracted by some external impression; or it must have an equal tendency to all directions, and then the result must be a state of perpetual rest.

The absurdity of this consequence is so evident, that the advocates of intellectual liberty have endeavoured to destroy its force by means of a distinction. "Motive," it has been said, "is indeed the occasion, the *sine qua non* of volition, but it has no inherent power to compel volition. Its influence depends upon the free and unconstrained surrender of the mind. Between opposite motives and considerations the mind can choose as it pleases, and by its determination can convert the motive which is weak and insufficient in the comparison into the strongest." But this hypothesis will be found exceedingly inadequate to the purpose for which it is produced. Motives must either have a necessary and irresistible influence, or they can have none.

For, first, it must be remembered, that the ground or reason of any event, of whatever nature it be, must be contained among the circumstances which precede that event. The mind is supposed to be in a state of previous indifference, and therefore cannot be, in itself considered, the source of the particular choice that

is made. There is a motive on one ſide and a motive on the other: and between theſe lie the true ground and reaſon of preference. But, wherever there is tendency to preference, there may be degrees of tendency. If the degrees be equal, preference cannot follow: it is equivalent to the putting equal weights into the oppoſite ſcales of a balance. If one of them have a greater tendency to preference than the other, that which has the greateſt tendency muſt ultimately prevail. When two things are balanced againſt each other, ſo much amount may be conceived to be ſtruck off from each ſide as exiſts in the ſmaller ſum, and the overplus that belongs to the greater is all that truly enters into the conſideration.

Add to this, ſecondly, that, if motive have not a neceſſary influence, it is altogether ſuperfluous. The mind cannot firſt chooſe to be influenced by a motive, and afterwards ſubmit to its operation: for in that caſe the preference would belong wholly to this previous volition. The determination would in reality be complete in the firſt inſtance; and the motive, which came in afterwards, might be the pretext, but could not be the true ſource of the proceeding *.

Laſtly, it may be obſerved upon the hypotheſis of free will, that the whole ſyſtem is built upon a diſtinction where there is no difference, to wit, a diſtinction between the intellectual and active powers of the mind. A myſterious philoſophy taught men to ſuppoſe, that, when the underſtanding had perceived any object to be deſirable, there was need of ſome diſtinct power to put the body in motion. But reaſon finds no ground for this ſuppoſition; nor is it poſſible to conceive, that, in the caſe of an intellectual faculty placed in an aptly organiſed body, preference can exiſt, together with a conſciouſneſs, gained from experience, of our power

* *The argument from the impoſſibility of free will is treated with great force of reaſoning in Jonathan Edward's Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will.*

to obtain the object preferred, without a certain motion of the animal frame being the neceſſary reſult. We need only attend to the obvious meaning of the terms in order to perceive that the will is merely, as it has been happily termed, "the laſt act of the underſtanding*," "one of the different caſes of the aſſociation of ideas†." What indeed is preference, but a perception of ſomething that really inheres or is ſuppoſed to inhere in the objects themſelves? It is the judgment, true or erroneous, which the mind makes reſpecting ſuch things as are brought into compariſon with each other. This is indeed the ſame principle as was eſtabliſhed upon a former occaſion, when we undertook to prove that the voluntary actions of men originate in their opinions‡. But, if this fact had been ſufficiently attended to, the freedom of the will would never have been gravely maintained by philoſophical writers; ſince no man ever imagined that we were free to feel or not to feel an impreſſion made upon our organs, and to believe or not to believe a propoſition demonſtrated to our underſtanding.

It muſt be unneceſſary to add any thing farther on this head, unleſs it be a momentary recollection of the ſort of benefit that freedom of the will would confer upon us, ſuppoſing it poſſible. Man being, as we have here found him to be, a creature, whoſe actions flow from the ſimpleſt principle, and who is governed by the apprehenſions of his underſtanding, nothing farther is requiſite but the improvement of his reaſoning faculty, to make him virtuous and happy. But did he poſſeſs a faculty independent of the underſtanding, and capable of reſiſting from mere caprice the moſt powerful arguments, the beſt education and the moſt ſedulous inſtruction might be of no uſe to him. This freedom we ſhall eaſily perceive to be his bane and his curſe; and the only hope of laſting benefit to the ſpecies would be, by drawing cloſer the connection

* *Clarke.* † *Hartley.* ‡ *Book* I, *Chap.* V.

between the external motions and the underſtanding, wholly to extirpate it. The virtuous man, in proportion to his improvement, will be under the conſtant influence of fixed and invariable principles; and ſuch a being as we conceive God to be, can never in any one inſtance have exerciſed this liberty, that is, can never have acted in a fooliſh and tyrannical manner. Freedom of the will is abſurdly repreſented as neceſſary to render the mind ſuſceptible of moral principles; but in reality, ſo far as we act with liberty, ſo far as we are independent of motives, our conduct is as independent of morality as it is of reaſon, nor is it poſſible that we ſhould deſerve either praiſe or blame for a proceeding thus capricious and indiſciplinable.

CHAP. VIII.

INFERENCES FROM THE DOCTRINE OF NECESSITY.

Idea it ſuggeſts to us of the univerſe.—Influence on our moral ideas:—action—virtue—exertion—perſuaſion—exhortation—ardour—complacence and averſion—puniſhment—repentance—praiſe and blame—intellectual tranquillity.—Language of neceſſity recommended.

CONSIDERING then the doctrine of moral neceſſity as ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, let us proceed to the conſequences that are to be deduced from it. This view of things preſents us with an idea of the univerſe as connected and cemented in all its parts, nothing in the boundleſs progreſs of things being capable of happening otherwiſe than it has actually happened. In the life of every human being there is a chain of cauſes, generated in the lapſe of ages which preceded his birth, and going on in regular proceſſion through the whole period of his exiſtence, in conſequence of which it was impoſſible for him to act in any inſtance otherwiſe than he has acted.

The contrary of this having been the conception of the mass of mankind in all ages, and the ideas of contingency and accident having perpetually obtruded themselves, the established language of morality has been universally tinctured with this error. It will therefore be of no trivial importance to enquire how much of this language is founded in the truth of things, and how much of what is expressed by it is purely imaginary. Accuracy of language is the indispensable prerequisite of sound knowledge, and without attention to that subject we can never ascertain the extent and importance of the consequences of necessity.

First then it appears, that, in the emphatical and refined sense in which the word has sometimes been used, there is no such thing as action. Man is in no case, strictly speaking, the beginner of any event or series of events that takes place in the universe, but only the vehicle through which certain causes operate, which causes, if he were supposed not to exist, would cease to operate. Action however, in its more simple and obvious sense, is sufficiently real, and exists equally both in mind and in matter. When a ball upon a billiard-board is struck by the mace, and afterwards impinges upon a second ball, the ball which was first in motion is said to act upon the second, though it operate in the strictest conformity to the impression it received, and the motion it communicates be precisely determined by the circumstances of the case. Exactly similar to this, upon the principles already explained, are the actions of the human mind. Mind is a real cause, an indispensable link in the great chain of the universe; but not, as has sometimes been supposed, a cause of that paramount description, as to supersede all necessities, and be itself subject to no laws and methods of operation. Upon the hypothesis of a God, it is not the choice, apprehension or judgment of that being, so properly as the truth which was the foundation of that judgment, that has been the source of all contingent and particular existences. His

exiſtence, if neceſſary, was neceſſary only as the ſenſorium of truth and the medium of its operation.

Is this view of things incompatible with the exiſtence of virtue?

If by virtue we underſtand the operation of an intelligent being in the exerciſe of an optional power, ſo that under the ſame preciſe circumſtances it might or might not have taken place, undoubtedly it will annihilate it.

But the doctrine of neceſſity does not overturn the nature of things. Happineſs and miſery, wiſdom and error will ſtill be diſtinct from each other, and there will ſtill be a connection between them. Wherever there is diſtinction there is ground for preference and deſire, or on the contrary for neglect and averſion. Happineſs and wiſdom will be objects worthy to be deſired, miſery and error worthy to be diſliked. If therefore by virtue we mean that principle which aſſerts the preference of the former over the latter, its reality will remain undiminiſhed by the doctrine of neceſſity.

Virtue, if we would reaſon accurately, ſhould perhaps be conſidered by us in the firſt inſtance objectively, rather than as modifying any particular beings *. Virtuous conduct, is conduct propoſing to itſelf a certain end: by its tendency to anſwer that end its value and purity are to be tried. Its purpoſe is the production of happineſs, and the aptitude or inaptitude of particular beings in this reſpect, will decide their importance in the ſcale of exiſtence. This aptitude is uſually termed capacity or power. Now power in the ſenſe of the hypotheſis of liberty is altogether chimerical. But power in the ſenſe in which it is ſometimes affirmed of inanimate ſubſtances, is equally true of thoſe which are animate. A candleſtick has the power or capacity of retaining a candle in a perpendicular direction. A knife has a capacity of cut-

* *Book* II, *Chap.* IV.

ting. In the ſame manner a human being has a capacity of walking: though it may be no more true of him, than of the inanimate ſubſtance, that he has an option to exerciſe or not to exerciſe that capacity. Again, there are different degrees as well as different claſſes of capacity. One knife is better adapted for the purpoſes of cutting than another.

There are two conſiderations relative to any particular being, that generate approbation, and this whether the being be poſſeſſed of conſciouſneſs or no. Theſe conſiderations are capacity and the application of capacity. We approve of a ſharp knife rather than a blunt one, becauſe its capacity is greater. We approve of its being employed in carving food, rather than in maiming men or other animals, becauſe that application of its capacity is preferable. But all approbation or preference is relative to utility or general good. A knife is as capable as a man of being employed in purpoſes of utility, and the one is no more free than the other as to its employment. The mode in which a knife is made ſubſervient to theſe purpoſes is by material impulſe. The mode in which a man is made ſubſervient is by inducement and perſuaſion. But both are equally the affair of neceſſity. The man differs from the knife, as the iron candleſtick differs from the braſs one; he has one more way of being acted upon. This aditional way in man is motive, in the candleſtick is magnetiſm.

Virtue is a term which has been appropriated to deſcribe the effects produced by men under the influence of motives in promoting the general good: it deſcribes the application of ſentient and human capacity, and not the application of capacity in inanimate ſubſtances. The word, thus explained, is to be conſidered as rather ſimilar to grammatical diſtinction, than to real and philoſophical difference. Thus in Latin *bonus* is *good* as affirmed of a man, *bona* is *good* as affirmed of a woman. In the ſame manner we can as eaſily conceive of the capacity of an inanimate as of

an animate ſubſtance being applied to the general good, and as accurately deſcribe the beſt poſſible application of the one as of the other. The end, that upon which the application depends for its value, is the ſame in both inſtances. But we call the latter virtue and duty, and not the former. Theſe words may in a popular ſenſe be conſidered as either maſculine or feminine, but never neuter. The exiſtence of virtue therefore, if by this term we mean the real and eternal difference between virtue and vice, the importance of a virtuous character, and the approbation that is due to it, is not annihilated by the doctrine of neceſſity, but rather illuſtrated and confirmed.

But, if the doctrine of neceſſity do not annihilate virtue, it tends to introduce a great change into our ideas reſpecting it. According to this doctrine it will be abſurd for a man to ſay, "I will exert myſelf," "I will take care to remember," or even "I will do this." All theſe expreſſions imply as if man were or could be ſomething elſe than what motives make him. Man is in reality a paſſive, and not an active being. In another ſenſe however he is ſufficiently capable of exertion. The operations of his mind may be laborious, like thoſe of the wheel of a heavy machine in aſcending a hill, may even tend to wear out the ſubſtance of the ſhell in which it acts, without in the ſmalleſt degree impeaching its paſſive character. If we were conſtantly aware of this, our minds would not glow leſs ardently with the love of truth, juſtice, happineſs and mankind. We ſhould have a firmneſs and ſimplicity in our conduct, not waſting itſelf in fruitleſs ſtruggles and regrets, not hurried along with infantine impatience, but ſeeing actions with their conſequences, and calmly and unreſervedly given up to the influence of thoſe comprehenſive views which this doctrine inſpires.

As to our conduct towards others in instances where we were concerned to improve and meliorate their minds, we should address our representations and remonstrances to them with double confidence. The believer in free will can expostulate with or correct his pupil with faint and uncertain hopes, conscious that the clearest exhibition of truth is impotent, when brought into contest with the unhearing and indisciplinable faculty of will; or in reality, if he were consistent, secure that it could produce no effect. The necessarian on the contrary employs real antecedents, and has a right to expect real effects.

But, though he would represent, he would not exhort, for this is a term without a meaning. He would suggest motives to the mind, but he would not call upon it to comply, as if it had a power to comply or not to comply. His office would consist of two parts, the exhibition of motives to the pursuit of a certain end, and the delineation of the easiest and most effectual way of attaining that end.

There is no better scheme for enabling us to perceive how far any idea that has been connected with the hypothesis of liberty has a real foundation, than to translate the usual mode of expressing it into the language of necessity. Suppose the idea of exhortation, so translated to stand thus: "To enable any arguments I may suggest to you to make a suitable impression, it is necessary that they should be fairly considered. I proceed therefore to evince to you the importance of attention, knowing, that, if I can make this importance sufficiently manifest, attention will inevitably follow." I should surely be far better employed in enforcing directly the truth I am desirous to impress, than in having recourse to this circuitous mode of treating attention as if it were a separate faculty. Attention will in reality always be proportionate to our apprehension of the importance of the subject before us.

At first sight it may appear as if, the moment I was satisfied that exertion on my part was no better than a fiction, and that I was the passive instrument of causes exterior to myself, I should become indifferent to the objects which had hitherto interested me the most deeply, and lose all that inflexible perseverance, which seems inseparable from great undertakings. But this cannot be the true state of the case. The more I resign myself to the influence of truth, the clearer will be my perception of it. The less I am interrupted by questions of liberty and caprice, of attention and indolence, the more uniform will be my constancy. Nothing could be more unreasonable than that the sentiment of necessity should produce in me a spirit of neutrality and indifference. The more certain is the connection between effects and causes, the more chearfulness should I feel in yielding to painful and laborious employments.

It is common for men impressed with the opinion of free will, to entertain resentment, indignation and anger against those who fall into the commission of vice. How much of these feelings is just, and how much erroneous? The difference between virtue and vice will equally remain upon the opposite hypothesis. Vice therefore must be an object of rejection and virtue of preference; the one must be approved and the other disapproved. But our disapprobation of vice will be of the same nature as our disapprobation of an infectious distemper.

One of the reasons why we are accustomed to regard the murderer with more acute feelings of displeasure than the knife he employs, is that we find a more dangerous property, and greater cause for apprehension, in the one than in the other. The knife is only accidentally an object of terror, but against the murderer we can never be enough upon our guard. In the same manner we regard the middle of a busy street with less complacency as a place for walking than the side, and the ridge of a house

with more averſion than either. Independently therefore of the idea of freedom, mankind in general find in the enormouſly vicious a ſufficient motive of apprehenſion and diſpleaſure. With the addition of that idea it is no wonder that they ſhould be prompted to ſentiments of the moſt intemperate abhorrence.

Theſe ſentiments obviouſly lead to the prevailing conceptions on the ſubject of puniſhment. The doctrine of neceſſity would teach us to claſs puniſhment in the liſt of the means we poſſeſs of influencing the human mind, and may induce us to enquire into its utility as an inſtrument for reforming error. The more the human mind can be ſhewn to be under the influence of motive, the more certain it is that puniſhment will produce a great and unequivocal effect. But the doctrine of neceſſity will teach us to look upon puniſhment with no complacence, and at all times to prefer the moſt direct means of encountering error, the developement of truth. Whenever puniſhment is employed under this ſyſtem, it will be employed, not for any intrinſic recommendation it poſſeſſes, but only as it ſhall appear to conduce to general utility.

On the contrary it is uſually imagined, that, independently of the ſuppoſed utility of puniſhment, there is proper deſert in the criminal, a certain fitneſs in the nature of things that renders pain the ſuitable concomitant of vice. It is therefore frequently ſaid, that it is not enough that a murderer ſhould be tranſported to a deſert iſland, where there ſhould be no danger that his malignant propenſities ſhould ever again have opportunity to act; but that it is alſo right the indignation of mankind againſt him ſhould expreſs itſelf in the infliction of ſome actual ignominy and pain. On the contrary, under the ſyſtem of neceſſity the terms, guilt, crime, deſert and accountableneſs, in the abſtract and general ſenſe in which they have ſometimes been applied, have no place.

Correlative to the feelings of reſentment, indignation and anger againſt the offences of others, are thoſe of repentance, contrition and ſorrow for our own. As long as we admit of an eſſential difference between virtue and vice, no doubt all erroneous conduct whether of ourſelves or others will be regarded with diſapprobation. But it will in both caſes be conſidered, under the ſyſtem of neceſſity, as a link in the great chain of events which could not have been otherwiſe than it is. We ſhall therefore no more be diſpoſed to repent of our own faults, than of the faults of others. It will be proper to view them both as actions, injurious to the public good, and the repetition of which is to be deprecated. Amidſt our preſent imperfections it will perhaps be uſeful to recollect what is the error by which we are moſt eaſily ſeduced. But in proportion as our views extend, we ſhall find motives ſufficient to the practice of virtue, without a partial retroſpect to ourſelves, or a recollection of our own propenſities and habits.

In the ideas annexed to the words reſentment and repentance there is ſome mixture of true judgment and a ſound conception of the nature of things. There is perhaps ſtill more juſtice in the notions conveyed by praiſe and blame, though theſe alſo have been vitiated and diſtorted by the hypotheſis of liberty. When I ſpeak of a beautiful landſcape or an agreeable ſenſation, I employ the language of panegyric. I employ it ſtill more emphatically, when I ſpeak of a good action; becauſe I am conſcious that the panegyric to which it is juſtly entitled has a tendency to procure a repetition of ſuch actions. So far as praiſe implies nothing more than this, it perfect accords with the ſevereſt philoſophy. So far as it implies that the man could have abſtained from the virtuous action I applaud, it belongs only to the deluſive ſyſtem of liberty.

A farther conſequence of the doctrine of neceſſity is its tendency to make us ſurvey all events with a tranquil and placid temper, and approve and diſapprove without impeachment to our ſelf-poſſeſſion. It is true, that events may be contingent as to any knowledge we poſſeſs reſpecting them, however certain they are in themſelves. Thus the advocate of liberty knows that his relation was either loſt or ſaved in the great ſtorm that happened two months ago; he regards this event as paſt and certain, and yet he does not fail to be anxious about it. But it is not leſs true, that all anxiety and perturbation imply an imperfect ſenſe of contingency, and a feeling as if our efforts could make ſome alteration in the event. When the perſon recollects with clearneſs that the event is over, his mind grows compoſed; but preſently he feels as if it were in the power of God or man to alter it, and his diſtreſs is renewed. All that is more than this is the impatience of curioſity; but philoſophy and reaſon have an evident tendency to prevent a uſeleſs curioſity from diſturbing our peace. He therefore who regards all things paſt, preſent and to come as links of an indiſſoluble chain, will, as often as he recollects this comprehenſive view, be ſuperior to the tumult of paſſion; and will reflect upon the moral concerns of mankind with the ſame clearneſs of perception, the ſame unalterable firmneſs of judgment, and the ſame tranquillity, as we are accuſtomed to do upon the truths of geometry.

It would be of infinite importance to the cauſe of ſcience and virtue to expreſs ourſelves upon all occaſions in the language of neceſſity. The contrary language is perpetually intruding, and it is difficult to ſpeak two ſentences upon any topic connected with human action without it. The expreſſions of both hypotheſes are mixed in inextricable confuſion, juſt as the belief of both hypotheſes, however incompatible, will be found to exiſt in all uninſtructed minds. The reformation of which I ſpeak would probably be

found exceedingly practicable in itself; though, such is the subtlety of error, that we should at first find several revisals and much laborious study necessary before it could be perfectly weeded out. This must be the author's apology for not having attempted in the present work what he recommends to others.

CHAP. IX.

OF THE MECHANISM OF THE HUMAN MIND.

Nature of mechanism.—Its classes, material and intellectual.—Material system, or of vibrations.—The intellectual system most probable—from the consideration that thought would otherwise be a superfluity—from the established principles of reasoning from effects to causes.—Objections refuted.—Thoughts which produce animal motion may be—1. involuntary—2. unattended with consciousness.—The mind cannot have more than one thought at any one time.—Objection to this assertion from the case of complex ideas—from various mental operations—as comparison—apprehension.—Rapidity of the succession of ideas.—Application.—Duration measured by consciousness.—3. A distinct thought to each motion may be unnecessary—apparent from the complexity of sensible impressions.—The mind always thinks.—Conclusion.—The theory applied to the phenomenon of walking—to the circulation of the blood.—Of motion in general.—Of dreams.

THE doctrine of necessity being admitted, it follows that the theory of the human mind is properly, like the theory of every other series of events with which we are acquainted, a system of mechanism; understanding by mechanism nothing more than a regular connection of phenomena without any uncertainty of event, so that every incident requires a specific cause, and could be no otherwise in any respect than as the cause determined it to be.

But there are two ſorts of mechaniſm capable of being applied to the ſolution of this caſe, one which has for its medium only matter and motion, the other which has for its medium thought. Which of theſe is to be regarded as moſt probable?

According to the firſt we may conceive the human body to be ſo conſtituted as to be ſuſceptible of vibrations, in the ſame manner as the ſtrings of a muſical inſtrument. Theſe vibrations, having begun upon the ſurface of the body, are conveyed to the brain; and, in a manner that is equally the reſult of conſtruction, produce a ſecond ſet of vibrations beginning in the brain, and conveyed to the different organs or members of the body. Thus it may be ſuppoſed, that a piece of iron conſiderably heated is applied to the body of an infant, and that the report of this irritation and ſeparation of parts being conveyed to the brain, vents itſelf again in a ſhrill and piercing cry. It is in this manner that we are apt to imagine certain convulſive and ſpaſmodic affections to take place in the body. The caſe, as here deſcribed, is ſimilar to that of the bag of a pair of bagpipes, which, being preſſed in a certain manner, utters a groan, without any thing more being neceſſary to account for this phenomenon, than the known laws of matter and motion. Let us add to theſe vibrations a ſyſtem of aſſociations to be carried on by traces to be made upon the medullary ſubſtance of the brain, by means of which paſt and preſent impreſſions are connected according to certain laws, as the traces happen to approach or run into each other; and we have then a complete ſcheme for accounting in a certain way for all the phenomena of human action. It is to be obſerved that, according to this ſyſtem, mind or perception is altogether unneceſſary to explain the appearances. It might for other reaſons be deſirable or wiſe, in the author of the univerſe for example, to introduce a thinking ſubſtance or a power of perception as a ſpectator of the proceſs.

But this percipient power is altogether neutral, having no concern either as a medium or otherwiſe in producing the events*.

The ſecond ſyſtem, which repreſents thought as the medium of operation, is not leſs a ſyſtem of mechaniſm according to the doctrine of neceſſity, but it is a mechaniſm of a totally different kind.

There are various reaſons calculated to perſuade us that this laſt hypotheſis is the moſt probable. No inconſiderable argument may be derived from the ſingular and important nature of that property of human beings, which we term thought; which it is ſurely ſomewhat violent to ſtrike out of our ſyſtem as a mere ſuperfluity.

A ſecond reaſon ſtill more deciſive than the former, ariſes from the conſtancy with which thought in innumerable inſtances accompanies the functions of this mechaniſm. Now this conſtancy of conjunction has been ſhown to be the only ground we have in any imaginable ſubject for inferring neceſſary connection, or that ſpecies of relation which exiſts between cauſe and effect.† We cannot therefore reject the principle which ſuppoſes thought to have an efficient ſhare in the mechaniſm of man, but upon grounds that would vitiate all our reaſonings from effects to cauſes.

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* *The above will be found to be a tolerably accurate deſcription of the hypotheſis of the celebrated Hartley. It was unneceſſary to quote his words, as it would be foreign to the purpoſe of the preſent work to enter into a refutation of any individual writer. The ſagacity of Hartley, in having pointed out the neceſſary connection of the phenomena of mind, and ſhewn the practicability of reducing its different operations to a ſimple principle, cannot be too highly applauded. The reaſonings of the preſent chapter, if juſt, may be conſidered as giving farther ſtability to his principal doctrine, by freeing it from the ſcheme of material automatiſm with which it was unneceſſarily clogged.*

† *Chap.* VII.

It may be objected, "that, though this contiguity of event argues neceſſary connection, yet the connection may be exactly the reverſe of what is here ſtated, motion being in all inſtances the cauſe, and thought never any thing more than an effect." But this is contrary to every thing we know of the ſyſtem of the univerſe, in which each event appears to be alternately both the one and the other, nothing terminating in itſelf, but every thing leading on to an endleſs chain of conſequences.

It would be equally vain to object, "that we are unable to conceive how thought can have any tendency to produce motion in the animal ſyſtem;" ſince it has juſt appeared that this ignorance is by no means peculiar to the ſubject before us. We are univerſally unable to perceive the ground of neceſſary connection *.

It being then ſufficiently clear that there are cogent reaſons to perſuade us, that thought is the medium through which the motions of the animal ſyſtem are generally carried on, let us proceed to conſider what is the nature of thoſe thoughts by which the limbs and organs of our body are ſet in motion. It will then probably be found, that the difficulties which have clogged the intellectual hypotheſis, are principally founded in erroneous notions derived from the ſyſtem of liberty; as if there were any eſſential difference between thoſe thoughts which are the medium of generating motion, and thoughts in general.

Firſt, thought may be the ſource of animal motion, without partaking in any degree of volition, or deſign. It is certain that there is a great variety of motions in the animal ſyſtem, which are in every view of the ſubject involuntary †. Such, for example, are the cries of an infant, when it is firſt impreſſed with the ſenſation of pain. In the firſt motions of the animal ſyſtem, nothing of any ſort

* *Chap.* VII. † *Book* I, *Chap.* V.

could poſſibly be foreſeen, and therefore nothing of any ſort could be intended. Yet theſe motions have ſenſation or thought for their conſtant concomitant; and therefore all the arguments which have been already alleged, remain in full force, to prove that thought is the medium of their production.

Nor will this appear extraordinary, if we conſider the nature of volition itſelf. In volition, if the doctrine of neceſſity be true, the mind is altogether paſſive. Two ideas preſent themſelves in ſome way connected with each other; and a perception of preferableneſs neceſſarily follows. An object having certain deſirable qualities, is perceived to be within my reach; and my hand is neceſſarily ſtretched out with an intention to obtain it. If a perception of preference or deſirableneſs irreſiſtibly lead to animal motion, why may not the mere perception of pain? All that the adverſary of automatiſm is concerned to maintain is, that thought is an eſſential link in the chain; and that, the moment it is taken away, the links that were before have no longer any tendency to produce motion in the links that were after.—It is poſſible that, as a numerous claſs of motions have their conſtant origin in thought, ſo there may be no thoughts altogether unattended with motion.

Secondly, thought may be the ſource of animal motion, and at the ſame time be unattended with conſciouſneſs. This is undoubtedly a diſtinction of conſiderable refinement, depending upon the preciſe meaning of words; and, if any perſon ſhould chooſe to expreſs himſelf differently on the ſubject, it would be uſeleſs obſtinately to diſpute that difference with him. By the conſciouſneſs which accompanies any thought there ſeems to be ſomething implied diſtinct from the thought itſelf. Conſciouſneſs is a ſort of ſupplementary reflection, by which the mind not only has the thought, but adverts to its own ſituation and obſerves that it has it. Conſciouſneſs therefore, however nice the diſtinction, ſeems to be a ſecond thought,

In order to aſcertain whether every thought be attended with conſciouſneſs, it may be proper to conſider whether the mind can ever have more than one thought at any one time. Now this ſeems altogether contrary to the very nature of mind. My preſent thought is that to which my preſent attention is yielded; but I cannot attend to ſeveral things at once. This aſſertion appears to be of the nature of an intuitive axiom; and experience is perpetually reminding us of its truth. In comparing two objects, we frequently endeavour, as it were, to draw them together in the mind, but we ſeem obliged to paſs ſucceſſively from the one to the other.

But, though it be intuitively true, that we can attend to but one thing, or, in other words, have but one thought, at one time, and though intuitive and ſelf-evident propoſitions do not, properly ſpeaking, admit of being ſupported by argument, yet there is a collateral conſideration, ſomething in the nature of an argument, that may be adduced in ſupport of this propoſition. It is at preſent generally admitted by all accurate reaſoners upon the nature of the human mind, that its whole internal hiſtory may be traced to one ſingle principle, aſſociation. There are but two ways in which a thought can be excited in the mind, firſt, by external impreſſion, ſecondly, by the property, which one thought exiſting in the mind is found to have, of introducing a ſecond thought through the means of ſome link of connection between them. This being premiſed, (let us ſuppoſe a given mind to have two ideas at the ſame time.) There can be no reaſon why either of theſe ideas ſhould prove ungenerative, or why the two ideas they are moſt proper to bring after them ſhould not coexiſt as well as their predeceſſors. Let the ſame proceſs be repeated indefinitely. We have then two trains of thinking exactly contemporray in the ſame mind. Very curious queſtions will here ariſe. Have they any communication? Do they flow ſeparately, or occaſionally croſs and interrupt each

other? Can any reaſon be given why one of them ſhould not relate to the doctrine of fluxions and the other to the drama? in other words, why the ſame man ſhould not at the ſame time be both Newton and Shakeſpeare? Why may not one of theſe coexiſting trains be of a joyful, and the other of a ſorrowful tenour? There is no abſurdity that may not be ſupported upon the aſſumption of this principle. In fact we have no other conception of identity as it relates to the human mind, than that of a ſingle idea, ſuperſedeable by external impreſſion, or regularly leading on, by means of various connections, to an indefinite train of ideas in uninterrupted ſucceſſion.

But this principle, though apparently ſupported both by reaſon and intuition, is not unattended with difficulties. The firſt is that which ariſes from the caſe of complex ideas. This will beſt be apprehended if we examine it as it relates to viſible objects. "Let us ſuppoſe that I am at preſent employed in the act of reading. I appear to take in whole words and indeed cluſters of words by a ſingle act of the mind. But let it be granted for a moment that I ſee each letter ſucceſſively. Yet each letter is made up of parts: the letter D for example of a right line and a curve, and each of theſe lines of the ſucceſſive addition or fluxion of points. If I conſider the line as a whole, yet its extenſion is one thing, and its terminations another. I could not ſee the letter, if the black line that deſcribes it, and the white ſurface that bounds it, were not each of them in the view of my organ. There muſt therefore, as it ſhould ſeem, upon the hypotheſis above ſtated, be an infinite ſucceſſion of ideas in the mind, before it could apprehend the ſimpleſt objects with which we are converſant. But we have no feeling of any ſuch thing, but rather of the preciſe contrary. Thouſands of human beings go out of the world, without ever apprehending that lines are compoſed of the addition or fluxion of points. An hypotheſis,

that is in direct oppoſition to ſo many apparent facts, muſt have a very uncommon portion of evidence to ſuſtain it, if indeed it can be ſuſtained."

The true anſwer to this objection ſeems to be the following. The mind can apprehend only a ſingle idea at once, but that idea needs not be a ſimple idea. The mind can apprehend two or more objects at a ſingle effort, but it cannot apprehend them as two. There ſeems no ſufficient reaſon to deny that all thoſe objects which are painted at once upon the retina of the eye, produce a joint and ſimultaneous impreſſion upon the mind. But they are not immediately conceived by the mind as many, but as one: the recollection may occur that they are made up of parts, but theſe parts cannot be conſidered by us otherwiſe than ſucceſſively. The reſolution of objects into their ſimple elements, is an operation of ſcience and improvement; but it is altogether foreign to our firſt and original conceptions. In all caſes the operations of our underſtanding are rather analytical than ſynthetical, rather thoſe of reſolution than compoſition. We do not begin with the ſucceſſive perception of elementary parts till we have obtained an idea of a whole; but, beginning with a whole, are capable of reducing it into its elements.

A ſecond difficulty is of a much ſubtler nature. It conſiſts in the ſeeming "impoſſibility of performing any mental operation, ſuch as compariſon for example, which has relation to two or more ideas, if we have not both ideas before us at once, if one of them be completely vaniſhed and gone, before the other begins to exiſt." The cauſe of this difficulty ſeems to lie in the miſtake of ſuppoſing that there is a real interval between the two ideas. It will perhaps be found upon an accurate examination, that, though we cannot have two ideas at once, yet it is not juſt to ſay, that the firſt has periſhed before the ſecond begins to exiſt. The inſtant that connects them, is of no real magnitude, and produces no real diviſion. The

mind is always full. It is this inſtant therefore that is the true point of compariſon.

It may be objected, "that compariſon is rather a matter of retroſpect deciding between two ideas that have been completely apprehended, than a perception which occurs in the middle, before the ſecond has been obſerved." To this objection experience will perhaps be found to furniſh the true anſwer. We find in fact that we cannot compare two objects, till we have paſſed and repaſſed them in the mind.

"Suppoſing this account of the operation of the mind in compariſon to be admitted, yet what ſhall we ſay to a complex ſentence containing twenty ideas, the ſenſe of which I fully apprehend at a ſingle hearing, nay, even in ſome caſes by the time one half of it has been uttered?"

The mere taſk of underſtanding what is affirmed to us, is of a very different nature from that of compariſon, or any other ſpecies of judgment that is to be formed concerning this affirmation. When a number of ideas are preſented in a train, though in one ſenſe there be variety, yet in another there is unity. Firſt, there is the unity of uninterrupted ſucceſſion, the perennial flow as of a ſtream, where the drop indeed that ſucceeds is numerically diſtinct from that which went before, but there is no ceſſation. Secondly, there is the unity of method. The mind apprehends, as the diſcourſe proceeds, a ſtrict aſſociation, from ſimilarity or ſome other ſource, between each idea as it follows in the proceſs, and that which went before it.

The faculty of underſtanding the different parts of a diſcourſe in their connection with each other, ſimple as it appears, is in reality of gradual and ſlow acquiſition. We are by various cauſes excluded from a minute obſervation of the progreſs of the infant mind, and therefore do not readily conceive by how imperceptible advances it arrives at a quickneſs of apprehenſion relative to the ſimpleſt ſentences. But we

more eaſily remark its ſubſequent improvement, and perceive how long it is before it can apprehend a diſcourſe of conſiderable length, or a ſentence of great abſtraction.

Nothing is more certain than the poſſibility of my perceiving the ſort of relation that exiſts between the different parts of a methodical diſcourſe, for example, Mr. Burke's Speech upon Occonomical Reform, though it be impoſſible for me after the ſevereſt attention to conſider the ſeveral parts otherwiſe than ſucceſſively. I have a latent feeling of this relation as the diſcourſe proceeds, but I cannot give a firm judgment reſpecting it otherwiſe than by retroſpect. It may however be ſuſpected that, even in the caſe of ſimple apprehenſion, an accurate attention to the operations of the mind would ſhow, that we ſcarcely in any inſtance hear a ſingle ſentence, without returning again and again upon the ſteps of the ſpeaker, and drawing more cloſely in our minds the preceding members of his period, before he arrives at its concluſion; though even this exertion of mind, ſubtle as it is, be not of itſelf thought ſufficient to authoriſe us to give a judgment of the whole.

But, if the principle here ſtated be true, how infinitely rapid muſt be the ſucceſſion of ideas? While I am ſpeaking no two ideas are in my mind at the ſame time, and yet with what facility do I paſs from one to another? If my diſcourſe be argumentative, how often do I paſs in review the topics of which it conſiſts before I utter them; and even while I am ſpeaking, continue the review at intervals without producing any pauſe in my diſcourſe? How many other ſenſations are experienced by me during this period, without ſo much as interrupting, that is, without materially diverting the train of my ideas? My eye ſucceſſively remarks a thouſand objects that preſent themſelves. My mind wanders to the different parts of my body, and receives a ſenſation from the chair upon which I ſit, from the table upon which I

lean; from the pinching of a ſhoe, from a ſinging in my ear, a pain in my head, or an irritation of the breaſt. When theſe moſt perceptibly occur, my mind paſſes from one to another, without feeling the minuteſt obſtacle, or being in any degree diſtracted by their multiplicity. From this curſory view of the ſubject it appears that we have a multitude of different ſucceſſive perceptions in every moment of our exiſtence *.—To return.

Conſciouſneſs, as it has been above defined, appears to be one of the departments of memory. Now the nature of memory, ſo far as it relates to the ſubject of which we are treating, is exceedingly obvious. An infinite number of thoughts paſſed through my mind in the laſt five minutes of my exiſtence. How many of them am I now able to recollect? How many of them ſhall I recollect tomorrow? One impreſſion after another is perpetually effacing from this intellectual regiſter. Some of them may with great attention and effort be revived; others obtrude themſelves uncalled for; and a third ſort are perhaps out of the reach of any power of thought to reproduce, as having never left their traces behind them for a moment. If the memory be capable of ſo many variations and degrees of intenſity, may there not be ſome caſes with which it never connects itſelf? If the ſucceſſion of thoughts be ſo inexpreſſibly rapid, may they not paſs over ſome topics with ſo delicate a touch, as to elude the ſupplement of conſciouſneſs?

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* *An attempt has been made to calculate theſe, but there is no reaſon to believe that the calculation deſerves to be conſidered as a ſtandard of truth. Senſations leave their images behind them, ſome for a longer and ſome for a ſhorter time; ſo that, in two different inſtances, the calculation is in one caſe eight, and in another three hundred and twenty to a ſecond. See Watſon on Time, Ch.* II.

It seems to be consciousness, rather than the succession of ideas, that measures time to the mind. The succession of ideas is in all cases exceedingly rapid, and it is by no means clear that it can be accelerated. We find it impracticable in the experiment to retain any idea in our mind unvaried for any perceptible duration. Continual flux appears to take place in every part of the universe. Thought, like matter, may be said, in a practical sense, to be infinitely divisible. Yet time seems to our apprehension to flow now with a precipitated and now with a tardy course. The indolent man reclines for hours in the shade; and, though his mind be perpetually at work, the silent progress of time is unobserved. But, when acute pain or uneasy expectation obliges consciousness to recur with unusual force, the time appears insupportably long. Indeed it is a contradiction in terms to suppose that the succession of thoughts, where there is nothing that perceptibly links them together, where they totally elude the memory and instantly vanish, can be a measure of time to the mind. That there is such a state of mind in some cases assuming a permanent form, has been so much the general opinion of mankind, that it has obtained a name, and is called reverie. It is probable from what has been said, that thoughts of reverie, understanding by that appellation thoughts untransmitted to the memory, perpetually take their turn with our more express and digested thoughts, even in the most active scenes of our life.

Lastly, thought may be the source of animal motion, and yet there may be no need of a distinct thought producing each individual motion. This is a very essential point in the subject before us. In uttering a cry for example, the number of muscles and articulations of the body concerned in this operation is very great; shall we say that the infant has a distinct thought for each of these articulations?

The answer to this question will be considerably facilitated, if we recollect the manner in which the

impreſſions are blended, which we receive from external objects. The ſenſe of feeling is diffuſed over every part of my body, I feel the different ſubſtances that ſupport me, the pen I guide, various affections and petty irregularities in different parts of my frame, nay, the very air that environs me. But all theſe impreſſions are abſolutely ſimultaneous, and I can have only one perception at once. Out of theſe various impreſſions, the moſt powerful, or that which has the greateſt advantage to ſolicit my attention, overcomes and drives out the reſt; or, which not leſs frequently happens, ſome idea of aſſociation ſuggeſted by the laſt preceding idea wholly withdraws my attention from every external object. It is probable however that this perception is imperceptibly modified by the miniature impreſſions that accompany it, juſt as we actually find that the very ſame ideas preſented to a ſick man, take a peculiar tinge, that renders them exceedingly different from what they are in the mind of a man in health. It has been already ſhown that, though there is nothing leſs frequent than the apprehending of a ſimple idea, yet every idea, however complex, offers itſelf to the mind under the conception of unity. The blending of numerous impreſſions into one perception is a law of our nature, and the cuſtomary train of our perceptions is entirely of this denomination. After this manner, not only every perception is complicated by a variety of ſimultaneous impreſſions, but every idea that now offers itſelf to the mind, is modified by all the ideas that ever exiſted in it. It is this circumſtance that conſtitutes the inſenſible empire of prejudice; and cauſes every object, which is exhibited to a number of individuals, to aſſume as many forms in their mind as there are individuals who view it.

Theſe remarks furniſh us with an anſwer to the long diſputed queſtion, whether the mind always thinks? It appears that innumerable impreſſions are perpetually made upon our body, and the only way in which the ſlighteſt of theſe is prevented from conveying a diſtinct

report to the mind, is in consequence of its being overpowered by some more considerable impression. It cannot therefore be alleged, "that, as one impression is found to be overpowered by another while we wake, the strongest only of the simultaneous impressions furnishing an idea to the mind; so the whole set of simultaneous impressions during sleep may be overpowered by some indisposition of the sensorium, and entirely fail of its effect." For, first, the cases are altogether different. From the explication above given, it appeared, that not one of the impressions was really lost, but tended, though in a very limited degree, to modify the predominant impression. Secondly, nothing can be more absurd than this supposition. Sleep ought according to this scheme, to cease of itself after the expiration of a certain term, but to be incapable of interruption from any experiment I might make upon the sleeper. To what purpose call or shake him? This act evinces my knowledge that he is in a state susceptible of impression. Shall we say, "that it requires an impression of a certain magnitude to excite the sensorium?" But a clock shall strike in the room and not wake him, when a voice of a much lower key produces that effect. What is the precise degree of magnitude necessary? We actually find the ineffectual calls that are addressed to us, as well as various other sounds, occasionally mixing with our dreams, without our being aware from whence these new perceptions arose. Thus it appears that every, the most minute, impression that is made upon our bodies in a state of sleep or deliquium, is conveyed to the mind, however faint may be its effect, or however it may be overpowered and swallowed up by other sensations or circumstances.

To apply these observations. If a number of impressions acting upon the mind, may come to us so blended as to make up one thought, or perception, why may not one thought, in cases where the mind acts as a cause, produce a variety of motions? It has already been shown that there is no essential

difference between the two cases. The mind is completely passive in both. Is there any sufficient reason to show, that, though it be possible for one substance, considered as the recipient of effects, to be the subject of a variety of simultaneous impressions, yet it is impossible for one substance, considered as a cause, to produce a variety of simultaneous motions? If it be granted that there is not, if the mere modification of a thought designing a motion in chief (a cry, for example, or a motion of the limbs), may produce a secondary motion, then it must perhaps farther be confessed possible for that modification which my first thought produced in my second, to carry on the motion, even though the second thought be upon a subject altogether different.

The consequences, which seem deducible from this theory of mind, are sufficiently memorable. By showing the extreme subtlety and simplicity of thought, it removes many of the difficulties that might otherwise rest upon its finer and more evanescent operations. If thought, in order to be the cause of animal motion, need not have either the nature of volition, or the concomitant of consciousness, and if a single thought may become a complex cause and produce a variety of motions, it will then become exceedingly difficult to trace its operations, or to discover any circumstances in a particular instance of animal motion, which can sufficiently indicate that thought was not the principle of its production, and by that means supersede the force of the general arguments adduced in the beginning of this chapter. Hence therefore it appears that all those motions which are observed to exist in substances having perception, and which are not to be discovered in substances of any other species, may reasonably be suspected to have thought, the distinguishing peculiarity of such substances, for their cause.

There are various classes of motion which will fall under this definition, beside those already enumerated. An example of one of these classes suggests itself in the phenomenon of walking. An attentive observer

will perceive various ſymptoms calculated to perſuade him, that every ſtep he takes during the longeſt journey is the production of thought. Walking is in all caſes originally a voluntary motion. In a child when he learns to walk, in a rope dancer when he begins to practiſe that particular exerciſe, the diſtinct determination of mind preceding each ſtep is ſufficiently perceptible. It may be abſurd to ſay, that a long ſeries of motions can be the reſult of ſo many expreſs volitions, when theſe ſuppoſed volitions leave no trace in the memory. But it is not unreaſonable to believe, that a ſpecies of motion which began in expreſs deſign, may, though it ceaſes to be the ſubject of conſcious attention, owe its continuance to a continued ſeries of thoughts flowing in that direction, and that, if life were taken away, material impulſe would not carry on the exerciſe for a moment. We actually find, that, when our thoughts in a train are more than commonly earneſt, our pace ſlackens, and ſometimes our going forward is wholly ſuſpended particularly in any leſs common ſpecies of walking, ſuch as that of deſcending a flight of ſtairs. In aſcending the caſe is ſtill more difficult, and accordingly we are accuſtomed wholly to ſuſpend the regular progreſs of reflection during that operation.

Another claſs of motions of a ſtill ſubtler nature, are the regular motions of the animal economy, ſuch as the circulation of the blood, and the pulſation of the heart. Are thought and perception the medium of theſe motions? We have the ſame argument here as in the former inſtances, conjunction of event. When thought begins, theſe motions alſo begin; and, when it ceaſes, they are at an end. They are therefore either the cauſe or effect of percipiency, or mind; but we ſhall be inclined to embrace the latter ſide of this dilemma, when we recollect that we are probably acquainted with many inſtances in which thought is the immediate cauſe of motions, which ſcarcely yield in ſubtlety to theſe;

but that, as to the origin of the faculty of thought, we are wholly uninformed. Add to this, that here are probably no motions of the animal economy, which we do not find it in the power of volition, and ſtill more of our involuntary ſenſations, to haſten or retard.

It is far from certain that the phenomenon of motion can any where exiſt where there is not thought. Motion may be diſtributed into four claſſes; the ſimpler motions which reſult from what are called the eſſential properties of matter and the laws of impulſe; the more complex ones which cannot be accounted for by the aſſumption of theſe laws, ſuch as gravitation, elaſticity, electricity and magnetiſm; the motions of the vegetable, and of the animal ſyſtems. Each of theſe ſeems farther than that which preceded it, from being accounted for by any thing we underſtand of the nature of matter.

Some light may be derived from what has been here advanced, upon the phenomenon of dreams. "In ſleep we ſometimes imagine," for example, "that we read long paſſages from books, or hear a long oration from a ſpeaker. In all caſes ſcenes and incidents paſs before us that in various ways excite our paſſions and intereſt our feelings. Is it poſſible that theſe ſhould be the unconſcious production of our own minds?"

It has already appeared, that volition is the accidental, and by no means the neceſſary concomitant, even of thoſe thoughts which are moſt active and efficient in the producing of motion. It is therefore no more to be wondered at that the mind ſhould be buſied in the compoſition of books which it appears to read, than that a train of thoughts of any other kind ſhould paſs through it without a conſciouſneſs of its being the author. In fact we perpetually annex wrong and erroneous ideas to this phraſe, that we are the authors. Though mind be a real and efficient cauſe, it is in no caſe a firſt cauſe. It is the medium through which operations

are produced. Ideas succeed each other in our sensorium according to certain necessary laws. The most powerful impression, either from without or within, constantly gets the better of all its competiors, and forcibly drives out the preceding thought, till it is in the same irresistible manner driven out by its successor.

CHAP. X.

OF SELF-LOVE AND BENEVOLENCE.

Question stated.—Nature of voluntary action.—Origin of benevolence.—Operation of habit—of opinion.—Reflex operation of enjoyment.—Complexity of motives.—Of malevolence.—Scheme of self-love incompatible with virtue.—Conclusion.

THE subject of the mechanism of the human mind is the obvious counterpart of that which we are now to examine. Under the former of these topics we have entered with considerable minuteness into the nature of our involuntary actions; the decision of the latter will in a great degree depend upon an accurate conception of such as are voluntary. The question of self-love and benevolence, is a question relative to the feelings and ideas by which we ought to be governed in our intercourse with our fellow men, or, in other words, in our moral conduct. But it is universally admitted that there can be no moral conduct, that we can be neither virtuous nor vicious, except in instances where our actions flow from intention, and are directed by foresight, or where they might have been so directed; and this is the definition of voluntary actions *. The question therefore of self-love and benevolence is a question of voluntary action.

* *Book* I, *Chap.* V, *p.* 62, 70.

The enquiry here propoſed is the ſame in effect, as the queſtion whether we are capable of being influenced by diſintereſted conſiderations. Once admit that we are, and it will not be diſputed that it is by ſuch conſiderations we ought to be influenced, in caſes where our neighbour or the public is to be eminently benefited.

This queſtion has been long and eagerly conteſted, and the majority of perſons who are accuſtomed to give ſome attention to ſpeculations of this ſort, have ranged themſelves on the ſide of ſelf-love. Among the French not a ſingle writer upon the nature of the human mind is to be found, who does not with more or leſs explicitneſs declare for this hypotheſis. Among ourſelves ſeveral authors of eminence have undertaken to ſupport the practicability of diſintereſted action*.

One of the writers who firſt contributed to render this enquiry a ſubject of general attention, was the duke de la Rochefoucault. He aſſerted the ſyſtem of ſelf-love in its groſſeſt form; and his expoſition of it amounts to little leſs than "that in every action of our lives we are directed by a calculation of perſonal intereſt." This notion has been gradually ſoftened down by his ſucceſſors; and the hypotheſis of ſelf-love is now frequently explained to mean only, "that, as every ſtate of a percipient being has in it a mixture of pleaſure or pain, the immediate ſenſation in either of theſe kinds is to be regarded as the ſole, proper, and neceſſary cauſe of the ſubſequent action." This fluctuation among the adherents of ſelf-love, has had the effect of making ſome of the arguments with which their principle has been attacked, apparently inapplicable to the neweſt ſtate of the queſtion. Let us ſee

* *Particulary Shafteſbury, Butler, Hutcheſon and Hume. The active and ardent ſpirit of the founders of religion has perhaps always carried them into the liberal ſyſtem.* See MATT. *ch.* xxii. *ver.* 37-41.

whether the point may not be put upon a ſimpler iſſue than has uſually been attempted.

An unanſwerable argument for the ſyſtem of diſintereſtedneſs, is contained in a propoſition ſo obvious, as for its very plainneſs to be expoſed to the riſque of contempt, *viz.* that the motive of every voluntary action conſiſts in the view preſent to the mind of the agent at the time of his determination. This is an inference which immediately reſults from the nature of volition. Volition is an affair of foreſight*. "No action is voluntary, any farther than it is accompanied with intention and deſign, and flows from the apprehenſion of an end to be accompliſhed. So far as it flows in any degree from another ſource, it is involuntary †." But if this be a juſt deſcription of voluntary action, then the converſe of this aſſertion muſt alſo be true; that whatever is propoſed by the mind as an end to be accompliſhed, whether it be life or death, pleaſure or pain, and relate to myſelf or my neighbour, has in it the true eſſence of a motive.—To illuſtrate this in relation to the ſubject in hand.

Voluntary action cannot exiſt but as the reſult of experience. Neither deſire nor averſion can have place, till we have had a conſciouſneſs of agreeable and diſagreeable ſenſations. Voluntary action implies deſire, and the idea of certain means to be employed for the attainment of the thing deſired.

The things firſt deſired by every thinking being, will be agreeable ſenſation, and the means of agreeable ſenſation. If he foreſee any thing that is not apprehended to be pleaſure or pain, or the means of pleaſure or pain, this will excite no deſire, and lead to no voluntary action.

A diſpoſition to promote the benefit of another, my child, my friend, my relation, or my fellow being, is one of the paſſions; underſtanding by the term

* *Book* I, *Chap.* V, *p.* 62. † *Chap.* VII, *p.* 298.

paſſion, a permanent and habitual tendency towards a certain courſe of action. It is of the ſame general nature as avarice or the love of fame. The good of my neighbour could not in the firſt inſtance have been choſen but as the means of agreeable ſenſation. His cries, or the ſpectacle of his diſtreſs importune me, and I am irreſiſtibly impelled to adopt means to remove this importunity. The child perceives in his own caſe that menaces or ſoothing tend to ſtop his cries, and he is induced to employ in a ſimilar inſtance that mode of the two which is moſt within his reach. He thinks little of the ſufferings endured, and is only uneaſy at the impreſſion made upon his organs. To this motive he ſpeedily adds the idea of eſteem and gratitude which are to be purchaſed by his beneficence. Thus the good of our neighbour, like the poſſeſſion of money, is originally purſued for the ſake of its advantage to ourſelves.

But it is the nature of the paſſions ſpeedily to convert what at firſt were means into ends. The avaricious man forgets the utility of money which firſt incited him to purſue it, fixes his paſſion upon the money itſelf, and counts his gold, without having in his mind any idea but that of ſeeing and handling it. Something of this ſort happens very early in the hiſtory of every paſſion. The moment we become attached to a particular ſource of pleaſure, beyond any idea we have of the rank it holds in the catalogue of ſources, it muſt be admitted that it is loved for its own ſake. The man who purſues wealth or fame with any degree of ardour, ſoon comes to concentre his attention in the wealth or the fame, without carrying his mind beyond, or thinking of any thing that is to reſult from them.

This is merely one caſe of the phenomena of habit*. All indulgence of the ſenſes is originally choſen for the ſake of the pleaſure that accrues. But the quantity of

* *Book* I, *Chap.* V, *p.* 69.

accruing pleaſure or pain is continually changing. In the mean time this is ſeldom adverted to; and when it is, the power of habit is frequently too ſtrong to be thus ſubdued. The propenſity to do again what we have been accuſtomed to do, recurs, when the motive that ſhould reſtrain us has eſcaped from our thoughts. Thus the drunkard and the lecher continue to purſue the ſame courſe of action, long after the pains have outweighed the pleaſures, and even after they confeſs and know this to be the real ſtate of the caſe. It is in this manner that men will often, for the ſake of that which has become the object of a favourite paſſion, conſent to ſacrifice what they generally know to contain in it a greater ſum of agreeable ſenſations. It is a trite and incontrovertible axiom, "that they will rather die, than part with it."

If this be the caſe in the paſſion of avarice or the love of fame, it muſt alſo be true in the inſtance of beneficence, that, after having habituated ourſelves to promote the happineſs of our child, our family, our country or our ſpecies, we are at length brought to approve and deſire their happineſs without retroſpect to ourſelves. It happens in this inſtance, as in the former, that we are occaſionally actuated by the moſt perfect diſintereſtedneſs, and willingly ſubmit to tortures and death rather than ſee injury committed upon the object of our affections.

Thus far there is a parallel nature in avarice and benevolence. But ultimately there is a wide difference between them. When once we have entered into ſo auſpicious a path as that of diſintereſtedneſs, reflection confirms our choice, in a ſenſe in which it never can confirm any of the factitious paſſions we have named. We find by obſervation that we are ſurrounded by beings of the ſame nature with ourſelves. They have the ſame ſenſes, are ſuſceptible of the ſame pleaſures and pains, capable of being

raiſed to the ſame excellence, and employed in the ſame uſefulneſs *. We are able in imagination to go out of ourſelves, and become impartial ſpectators of the ſyſtem of which we are a part. We can then make an appraiſement of our intrinſic and abſolute value; and detect the impoſition of that ſelf-regard which would repreſent our own intereſt as of as much value as that of all the world beſide. The deluſion being thus ſapped, we can, from time to time at leaſt, fall back in idea into our proper poſt, and cultivate thoſe views and affections which muſt be moſt familiar to the moſt perfect intelligence.

It is admitted on all hands that it is poſſible for a man to ſacrifice his own exiſtence to that of twenty others. Here then is an action poſſeſſing various recommendations: the advantage to ariſe to twenty men; their tranquillity and happineſs through a long period of remaining exiſtence; the benefits they will not fail to confer on thouſands of their contemporaries, and through them on millions of poſterity; and laſtly his own eſcape from uneaſineſs, and momentary exultation in an act of virtue. The advocates of ſelf-love are compelled to aſſert that the laſt conſideration only is of any value with him; and that he perceives the real ſtate of the caſe, without feeling himſelf in the ſmalleſt degree directly and properly affected by it. He engages in an act of generoſity, without one atom of true ſympathy, and wholly and excluſively influenced by conſiderations of the moſt ſelfiſh deſcription.

It is not eaſy to conceive an hypotheſis more ſingular than this. It is in direct oppoſition to experience, and what every man ſeems to know of himſelf. It undertakes to maintain that we are under a deluſion of the moſt extraordinary ſort; and which would appear, to a perſon not trained in a philoſophical ſyſtem, of all others the moſt improbable. It

* *Book* II, *Chap.* III.

affirms, that we are wholly incapable of being influenced by motives which seem to have an absolute power; that the philanthropist has no love for mankind, nor the patriot for his country; that no child ever had an affection for his parent, or parent for his child; in a word, that, when we imagine we are most generously concerned for another, we have no concern for him, but are anxious only for ourselves. Undoubtedly a thesis of this sort is in need of very cogent arguments to support it.

It must be admitted indeed as characteristic of every determination of the mind, that, when made, we feel uneasiness in the apprehension of any obstacle, and pleasure in indulging the desire and seeing events turn out conformably to the desire. But it would be absurd to say, "that the motive of our proceeding in this case is impatience and uneasiness, and that we are impelled to the sacrifices which are frequently made, by the mere wish to free ourselves from intolerable pain." Impatience and uneasiness are only generated by obstacles to the attainment ofour desires; and we often fulfil our purposes with a swiftness and impetuosity that leave no leisure for the recurrence of pain. The uneasiness of unfulfilled desire, implies the desire itself as the antecedent and parent of the uneasiness. It is because I wish my neighbour's advantage, that I am uneasy at his misfortune. I should no more be uneasy about this, than about the number of syllables contained in the present paragraph, if I had not previously loved it for its own sake.

This pleasure and pain however, though not the authors of my determination, undoubtedly tend to perpetuate and strengthen it. Such is conspicuously the case in the present instance. The man, who vigilantly conforms his affections to the standard of impartial justice, who loses the view of personal regards in the greater objects that engross his attention who, from motives of benevolence sits loose to life and all its

pleasures, and is ready without a sigh to sacrifice them to the public good, has an uncommonly exquisite source of happiness. When he looks back, he applauds the state of his own affections; and, when he looks out of himself, his sensations are refined in proportion to the comprehensiveness of his sentiments. He is filled with harmony within; and the state of his thoughts is uncommonly favourable to what we may venture to style the sublime emotions of tranquillity. It is not to be supposed than an experience of the pleasures of benevolence, should not tend to confirm in us a benevolent propensity.

The hypothesis of disinterestedness would never have had so many adversaries, if the complexity of human motives had been sufficiently considered. To illustrate this, let it be recollected that every voluntary action has in it a mixture of involuntary*. In the sense in which we have used the word motive in an early part of this work †, it is equally descriptive of the cause of action in both cases. Motive may therefore be distinguished, according to its different relations, into direct and indirect; understanding by the direct, that which is present to the mind of the agent at the time of his determination, and which belongs to every voluntary action and so much of every action as is voluntary; and by the indirect, that which operates without being adverted to by the mind, whether in the case of actions originally involuntary, or that have become so in whole or in part by the force of habit. Thus explained, it is incontrovertibly evident that the direct motive to many of our actions is purely disinterested. We are capable of self-oblivion, as well as of sacrifice. All that is strictly voluntary, in the beneficence of a man habitually generous and kind, commences from this point; if other considerations intervene in the sequel, they are indebted for their intervention to the disinterested motive. But, at the same time that this

* *Book* I, *Chap.* V, *p.* 70. † *P.* 62.

truth is clearly eſtabliſhed, it is not leſs true, firſt, that the indirect and original motive, that which laid the foundation of all our habits, is the love of agreeable ſenſation. Secondly, it is alſo to be admitted that there is probably ſomething perſonal directly and perceptibly mixing itſelf with ſuch of our beneficent actions as are of a ſenſible duration. We are ſo accuſtomed to fix our attention upon agreeable ſenſation, that we can ſcarcely fail to recollect at every interval the gratitude we ſhall excite or the approbation we ſhall ſecure, the pleaſure that will reſult to ourſelves from our neighbour's well being, the joys of ſelf-applauſe, or the uneaſineſs that attends upon ungratified deſire. Yet, after every deduction that can be made, the diſintereſted and direct motive, the profit and advantage of our neighbour, ſeems to occupy the principal place. This is at leaſt the firſt, often the only, thing in the view of the mind at the time the action is choſen. It is this from which, by way of eminence, it derives the character of voluntary action.

There is an obſervation ariſing in this place which it ſeems of ſome importance to mention. Pure malevolence is the counterpart of diſintereſted virtue; and almoſt all the conſiderations that prove the exiſtence of the one are of equal avail to prove the exiſtence of the other. It is not enough to ſay, I chooſe the pleaſure or pain of my neighbour, for the ſake of the gratification I have in contemplating it. This only removes the difficulty a ſingle ſtep, and will not account for the phenomenon of habit in either caſe. Both the one and the other are orginally choſen with a view to agreeable ſenſation; but in both caſes the original view is ſoon forgotten. It is as certain that there are human beings who take pleaſure in ſhrieks and agony, without a conſideration to any thing farther or different; as that the miſer comes at laſt to regard his guineas with delight, independently of a recollection of the benefits they may purchaſe.

There is one farther remark, which, though by

no means so conclusive as many that have been adduced, ought not to be omitted. If self-love be the only principle of action, there can be no such thing as virtue. Benevolent intention is essential to virtue*. Virtue, where it exists in any eminence, is a species of conduct modelled upon a true estimate of the different reasons inviting us to preference. He, that makes a false estimate, and prefers a trivial and partial good to an important and comprehensive one, is vicious. Virtue requires a certain disposition and view of the mind, and does not belong to the good which may accidentally and unintentionally result from our proceeding. The creditor that, from pure hardness of disposition, should cast a man into prison who, unknown to him, was upon the point of some atrocious and sanguinary action, would be not virtuous, but vicious. The mischief to result from the project of his debtor was no part of his motive; he thought only of gratifying his inordinate passion. Just so in the case stated a little before, the public benefactor, upon the system of self-love, prefers a single individual to twenty or to twenty millions. So far as relates to the real merits of the case, his own advantage or pleasure is a very insignificant consideration, and the benefit to be produced, suppose to a world, is inestimable. Yet he falsely and unjustly prefers the first, and regards the latter, separately taken, as nothing. If there be such a thing as justice, if I have a real and absolute value, upon which truth can decide, and which can be compared with what is greater or less, then, according to this system, the best action that ever was performed, may, for any thing we know, have been the action in the whole world of the most exquisite and deliberate injustice. Nay, it could not have been otherwise, since it produced the greatest good, and therefore was the in-

* *Book* II, *Chap.* IV.

dividual inſtance in which the greateſt good was moſt directly poſtponed to perſonal gratification. Such is the ſpirit of the doctrine we have endeavoured to refute.

On the other hand the juſt reſult of the arguments above adduced is, that men are capable of underſtanding the beauty of virtue, and the claims of other men upon their benevolence; and, underſtanding them, that theſe views, as well as every other perception which has relation to ſenſitive exiſtence, are of the nature of motives, ſometimes overpowered by other conſiderations, and ſometimes overpowering them, but always in their own nature capable of exciting to action, when not counteracted by pleas of a different ſort. Men are capable no doubt of preferring an inferior intereſt of their own to a ſuperior intereſt of others; but this preference ariſes from a combination of circumſtances, and is not the neceſſary and invariable law of our nature.

There is no doctrine in which the generous and elevated mind reſts with more ſatisfaction, than in that of which we are treating. If it be falſe, it is no doubt incumbent upon us to make the beſt of the ſmall remnant of good that remains. But it is a heartleſs proſpect for the moraliſt, who, when he has done all, has no hope to perſuade mankind to one atom of real affection towards any one individual of their ſpecies. We may be made indeed the inſtruments of good, but in a way leſs honourable, than that in which a frame of wood or a ſheet of paper may be made the inſtrument of good. The wood or the paper is at leaſt neutral. But we are drawn into the ſervice with affections of a diametrically oppoſite direction. When we perform the moſt benevolent action, it is with a view only to our own advantage, and with the moſt ſovereign and unreſerved neglect of that of others. We are inſtruments of good, in the ſame manner as bad men are ſaid to be the inſtruments of providence even when their inclinations are moſt refractory to its

degrees. In this sense we may admire the system of the universe, where public utility results from each man's contempt of that utility, and where the most beneficial actions of those, whom we have been accustomed to term the best men are only instances in which justice and the real merits of the case are most flagrantly violated. But we can think with little complacence of the individuals of whom this universe is composed. It is no wonder that philosophers whose system has taught them to look upon their fellow men as thus perverse and unjust, have been frequently cold in their temper, or narrow in their designs. It is no wonder that Rousseau, the most benevolent of them, and who most escaped the general contagion, has been driven to place the perfection of virtue in doing no injury *. Neither philosophy nor morality nor politics will ever show like themselves, till man shall be acknowledged for what he really is, a being capable of rectitude, virtue and benevolence, and who needs not always be led to actions of general utility by foreign and frivolous considerations.

The system of disinterested benevolence proves to us, that it is possible to be virtuous, and not merely to talk of virtue; that all which has been said by philosophers and moralists respecting impartial justice is not an unmeaning rant; and that when we call upon mankind to divest themselves of selfish and personal considerations, we call upon them for something they are able to practise. An idea like this reconciles us to our species; teaches us to regard with enlightened admiration the men who have appeared to lose the feeling of their personal existence in the pursuit of general advantage; and gives us reason to expect that, as men collectively advance in science and useful institution, they will proceed more and more to consolidate

* "*La plus sublime vertu est négative; elle nous instruit de ne jamais faire du mal à personne.*" EMILE, *Liv.* II.

their private judgment and their individual will with abſtract juſtice and the unmixed approbation of general happineſs.

What are the inferences that ought to be made from this doctrine with reſpect to political inſtitution? Certainly not that the intereſt of the individual ought to be made incompatible with the part he is expected to take in the intereſt of the whole. This is neither deſirable, nor even poſſible. But that ſocial inſtitution needs not deſpair of ſeeing men influenced by other and better motives. The true politician is bound to recollect that the perfection of mind conſiſts in diſintereſtedneſs. He ſhould regard it as the ultimate object of his exertions, to induce men to eſtimate themſelves at their juſt value, and neither to grant to themſelves nor claim from others a higher conſideration than they deſerve. Above all he ſhould be careful not to add vigour to the ſelfiſh paſſions. He ſhould gradually wean men from contemplating their own benefit in all that they do, and induce them to view with complacence the advantage that is to reſult to others.

The laſt perfection of this feeling conſiſts in that ſtate of mind which bids us rejoice as fully in the good that is done by others, as if it were done by ourſelves. The man who has attained to this improvement will be actuated neither by intereſt nor ambition, the love of honour nor the love of fame. He has a duty indeed obliging him to ſeek the good of the whole; but that good is his only object. If that good be effected by another hand, he feels no diſappointment. All men are his fellow labourers, but he is the rival of no man. Like Pedaretus in ancient ſtory, he is ready to exclaim: "I alſo have endeavoured to deſerve; but there are three hundred citizens in Sparta better than myſelf, and I rejoice."

CHAP. XI.

OF GOOD AND EVIL.

Definitions.—Principle of the Stoics examined.—Pleasure delineated.—Scale of happiness—the peasant and artisan—the man of wealth—the man of taste—the man of benevolence.—Inference.—System of optimism.—Errors of this system.—Mixture of truth.—Limitations.—Condition of the universe displayed.—Ill effects of optimism.—It is destructive of any consistent theory of virtue—blunts the delicacy of moral discrimination—reconciles us to the spectacle of perverseness in others.—Of persecution.

THERE is no disquisition more essential either in morality or politics than that which shall tend to give us clear and distinct ideas of good and evil, what it is we should desire, and what we should deprecate. We will therefore close the present volume with a few considerations upon this head.

The nature of good and evil, which is one of the plainest subjects upon which the human mind can be engaged, has been obscured by two sets of men: those who, from an eagerness to refine and exalt beyond measure the nature of virtue, have elevated it into something impossible and unmeaning: and those who, spurning the narrow limits of science and human understanding, have turned system-builders and fabricated a universe after their own peculiar fancy. We shall see, as we proceed, what has been the operation of these two errors. In the mean time it may be most safe to examine the subject in its genuine simplicity, uninfluenced by the preconceptions of party.

Good is a general name, including pleasure, and the means by which pleasure is procured. Evil is

a general name, including pain, and the means by which pain is produced. Of the two things included in these general names, the first is cardinal and substantive, the second has no intrinsic recommendations, but depends for its value on the other. Pleasure therefore is to be termed an absolute good; the means of pleasure are only relatively good. The same observation may be stated of pain *.

We inhabit a world where sensations do not come detached, but where every thing is linked and connected together. Of consequence, among things absolutely good there may be two classes. There are some things that are good and only good, pleasures that do not draw after them mischief, anguish and remorse. There may be other pleasures that are attended in the sequel with an overbalance of pain, and which, though absolutely good, are relatively evil. There may also be pains which, taken together with their consequences, are salutary. But this does not alter the original proposition: where there is any mixture of evil, all is not good; just as where there is any mixture of pain, all is not pleasure.

Let us see how this statement affects the theory and practice of virtue.

First, we are hereby enabled to detect their mistake who denied that "pleasure was the supreme good." The error of the Epicurean philosophers seems to have been, not in affirming that "pleasure was the supreme good," for this cannot be refuted; but in confining that pleasure which is the proper scope of human actions, to the pleasure of the individual who acts, and not admitting that the pleasure of others was an object which for its own sake could and ought to be pursued †.

That "pleasure is the supreme good" cannot be denied by him who is sufficiently attentive to the meaning of words. That which will give pleasure

* *Book* III, *Chap.* III. † *Chap.* X.

neither to ourſelves nor others, and from which the fruits of joy can be reaped in no ſtage and at no period, is neceſſarily good for nothing.

The oppoſers of the Epicurean maxim were terrified by a conſequence which they haſtily concluded might be built upon it. If pleaſure were the only thing that is worthy to be deſired, they thought that every man might reaſonably be juſtified in "walking in the ſight of his own eyes," and there would be no longer any rule of human conduct. Each man might ſay, "Pleaſure is the proper object of my purſuit; I beſt know what pleaſes me; and therefore however oppoſite is the plan of my conduct to your conceptions, it is unreaſonable and unjuſt for you to interfere with me."

An inference the oppoſite of this might with more propriety have been drawn from the maxim upon which we are deſcanting. Is "pleaſure the only good?" Then have we the moſt cogent reaſon for ſtudying pleaſure and reducing it to a ſcience, and not for leaving every man to purſue his own particular taſte, which is nothing more than the reſult of his education and the circumſtances in which he happens to have been placed, and by other leſſons and circumſtances may be corrected.

No man is entitled to complain of my ſober and diſpaſſionate expoſtulations reſpecting the ſpecies of pleaſure he thinks proper to purſue, becauſe no man ſtands alone, and can purſue his private conceptions of pleaſure, without affecting beneficially or injuriouſly the perſons immediately connected with him, and through them the reſt of the world. Even if he have perſuaded himſelf that it is his buſineſs to purſue his own pleaſure, and that he is not bound to attend ultimately to the pleaſure of others, yet it may eaſily be ſhown that it is generally ſpeaking the intereſt of each individual, that all ſhould form their plan of perſonal pleaſure with a ſpirit of deference and accommodation to the pleaſure of each other.

But putting the circumstance of the action and reaction of men in society out of the question, still there will be a science of pleasure, and it will be idle and erroneous to consider each man separately, and leave each to find his source of pleasure suitable to his particular humour. We have a common nature, and that common nature ought to be consulted. There is one thing or series of things that constitutes the true perfection of man *.

In the discussions that took place a few years ago in the English parliament and nation respecting the slave trade, the sentiment we are here combating was used as a topic of argument by some of those persons who, from certain deplorable prejudices, were able to prevail upon themselves to appear as advocates for this trade. "The slaves in the West Indies," they said, "are contented with their situation they are not conscious of the evils against which you exclaim; why then should you endeavour to alter their condition?"

The true answer to this question, even granting them their fact, would be: "It is not very material to a man of a liberal and enlarged mind, whether they are contented or no. Are they contented? I am not contented for them. I see in them beings of certain capacities, equal to certain pursuits and enjoyments. It is of no consequence in the question, that they do not see this, that they do not know their own interests and happiness. They do not repine? Neither does a stone repine. That which you mention as an alleviation, finishes in my conception the portrait of their calamity. Abridged as they are of independence and enjoyment, they have neither the apprehension nor spirit of men. I cannot bear to see human nature thus degraded. It is my duty, if I can, to make them a thousand times happier than they are, or have any conception of being."

* *Book* II, *Chap.* III, *p.* 127; *Book* III, *Chap.* VII, *p.* 196.

It is not difficult to form a ſcale of happineſs. Suppoſe it to be ſomething like the following.

The firſt claſs ſhall be ſuch as we may perhaps ſometimes find among the labouring inhabitants of the civilized ſtates of Europe. We will conceive a man working with his hands every day to obtain his ſubſiſtence. He riſes early to his labour, and leaves off every night weary and exhauſted. He takes a tranquil or a boiſterous refreſhment, and ſpends the hours of darkneſs in uninterrupted ſlumber. He does not quarrel with his wife oftener than perſons of his claſs regularly do; and his cares are few, as he has ſcarcely known the preſſure of abſolute want. He never repines but when he witneſſes luxuries he cannot partake, and that ſenſation is tranſient; and he knows no diſeaſes but thoſe which riſe from perpetual labour. The range of his ideas is ſcanty; and the general train of his ſenſations comes as near as the nature of human exiſtence will admit, to the region of indifference. This man is in a certain ſenſe happy. He is happier than a ſtone.

Our next inſtance ſhall be taken from among the men of rank, fortune and diſſipation. We will ſuppoſe the individual in queſtion to have an advantageous perſon and a ſound conſtitution. He enjoys all the luxuries of the palate, the choiceſt viands, and the beſt flavoured wines. He takes his pleaſures diſcreetly, ſo as not in the purſuit of pleaſure to loſe the power of feeling it. He ſhoots, he hunts. He frequents all public places. He ſits up late in ſcenes of gay reſort. He riſes late. He has juſt time to ride and dreſs, before he goes into company again. With a happy flow of ſpirits and a perpetual variety of amuſements, he is almoſt a ſtranger to *ennui*. But he is a model of ignorance. He never reads, and knows nothing beyond the topic of the day. He can ſcarcely conceive the meaning of the ſublime or pathetic; and he rarely thinks of any thing beyond himſelf. This man is happier than the peaſant. He is happier by all the pleaſures of the palate, and all the

gratifications of neatneſs, elegance and ſplendour in himſelf and the objects around him. Every day he is alive, inventing ſome new amuſement, or enjoying it. He taſtes the pleaſures of liberty; he is familiar with the gratifications of pride: while the peaſant ſlides through life with ſomething of the contemptible inſenſibility of an oyſter.

The man of taſte and liberal accompliſhments is more advantageouſly circumſtanced than he whom we have laſt deſcribed. We will ſuppoſe him to poſſeſs as many of the gratifications of expence as he deſires. But in addition to theſe, like the mere man of fortune in compariſon with the peaſant, he acquires new ſenſes, and a new range of enjoyment. The beauties of nature are all his own. He admires the overhanging cliff, the wide-extended proſpect, the vaſt expanſe of the ocean, the foliage of the woods, the ſloping lawn and the waving graſs. He knows the pleaſures of ſolitude, when man holds commerce alone with the tranquil ſolemnity of nature. He has traced the ſtructure of the univerſe, the ſubſtances which compoſe the globe we inhabit and are the materials of human induſtry, and the laws which hold the planets in their courſe amidſt the trackleſs fields of ſpace. He ſtudies, and has experienced the pleaſures which reſult from conſcious perſpicacity and diſcovered truth. He enters with a true reliſh into the ſublime and pathetic. He partakes in all the grandeur and enthuſiaſm of poetry. He is perhaps himſelf a poet. He is conſcious that he has not lived in vain, and that he ſhall be recollected with pleaſure, and extolled with ardour, by generations yet unborn. In this perſon, compared with the two preceding claſſes, we acknowledge ſomething of the features of man. They were only a better ſort of brutes; but he has ſenſations and tranſports of which they have no conception.

But there is a rank of man more fitted to excite our emulation than this, the man of benevolence. Study is cold, if it be not enlivened with the idea

of the happineſs to ariſe to mankind from the cultivation and improvement of ſciences *. The ſublime and pathetic are barren, unleſs it be the ſublime of true virtue and the pathos of true ſympathy. The pleaſures of the mere man of taſte and refinement "play round the head, but come not to the heart." There is no true joy but in the ſpectacle and contemplation of happineſs. There is no delightful melancholy but in pitying diſtreſs. The man who has once performed an act of exalted generoſity, knows that there is no ſenſation of corporeal or intellectual taſte to be compared with this. The man who has ſought to benefit nations, riſes above the mechanical ideas of barter and exchange. He aſks no gratitude. To ſee that they are benefited, or to believe that they will be ſo, is its own reward. He aſcends to the higheſt of human pleaſures, the pleaſures of diſintereſtedneſs. He enjoys all the good that mankind poſſeſs, and all the good that he perceives to be in reſerve for them. No man ſo truly promotes his own intereſt, as he that forgets it. No man reaps ſo copious a harveſt of pleaſure, as he who thinks only of the pleaſures of other men.

The inference from this ſurvey of human life is, that he who is fully perſuaded that pleaſure is the only good, ought by no means to leave every man to enjoy his peculiar pleaſure according to his own peculiar humour. Seeing the great diſparity there is between different conditions of human life, he ought conſtantly to endeavour to raiſe each claſs, and every individual of each claſs, to a claſs above it. This is the true equaliſation of mankind. Not to pull down thoſe who are exalted, and reduce all to a naked and ſavage equality. But to raiſe thoſe who are abaſed; to communicate to every man all genuine pleaſures, to elevate every man to all true wiſdom, and to make all men participators of a li-

* *Chap.* V, *p.* 250.

beral and comprehenſive benevolence. This is the path in which the reformers of mankind ought to travel. This is the prize they ſhould purſue. Do you tell me, "that human ſociety can never arrive at this improvement?" I do not ſtay to diſpute that point with you. We can come nearer it than we are. We can come nearer and nearer yet. This will not be the firſt time that perſons, engaged in the indefatigable purſuit of ſome accompliſhment have arrived at an excellence that ſurpaſſed their moſt ſanguine expectations.

The reſult of this part of the ſubject is, that thoſe perſons have been groſsly miſtaken, who taught that virtue was to be purſued for its own ſake, and repreſented pleaſure and pain as trivial matters and unworthy conſideration. Virtue is upon no other account valuable, than as it is the inſtrument of the moſt exquiſite pleaſure.—Be it obſerved, that it is one thing to ſay that pain is not an evil, which is abſurd, and another thing to ſay that temporary pains and pleaſures are to be deſpiſed, when the enduring of the one is neceſſary, and the declining the other unavoidable in the purſuit of excellent and permanent pleaſure, which is a moſt fundamental precept of wiſdom and morality.

Let us proceed to a ſecond point announced by us in the outſet, the conſideration of how the ſubject of good and evil has been darkened by certain fabuliſts and ſyſtem-builders. The ſyſtem alluded to under this head, is that of the optimiſts, who teach, "that every thing in the univerſe is for the beſt; and that, if any thing had happened otherwiſe than it has happened, the reſult would have been a diminution of the degree of happineſs and good."

That we may eſcape the error into which theſe perſons have been led by the daringneſs of their genius, and their mode of eſtimating things in the groſs and not in detail, we muſt be contented to follow experience, and not to outrun it.

It has already appeared that there is in the univerſe abſolute evil: and, if pain be evil (and it has been proved to be the only abſolute evil), it cannot be denied that, in the part of the univerſe with which we are acquainted, it exiſts in conſiderable profuſion. It has alſo appeared that there is a portion of abſolute evil which is relatively good, and which therefore, the preceding circumſtances being aſſumed was deſirable. Such, for example, is the amputation of a gangrened limb.

Whether or no thoſe preceding circumſtances were univerſally and in a comprehenſive ſenſe good, which rendered the introduction of the abſolute evil in queſtion neceſſary, is, to ſay the leaſt, a very doubtful point. But, if there be ſome preſumption in the negative even in the ſmalleſt inſtance, this preſumption againſt univerſal good is incalculably increaſed, when we recollect all the vice, diſorder and miſery that exiſt in the world.

Let us conſider what portion there is of truth that has been mixed with the doctrine of optimiſm. This is the ſame thing as to enquire, by means of what plauſibilities it gained footing in the world. The anſwer to theſe queſtions lies in two circumſtances.

Firſt, there is a degree of improvement real and viſible in the world. This is particularly manifeſt in the hiſtory of the civiliſed part of mankind during the three laſt centuries. The taking of Conſtantinople by the Turks (1453) diſperſed among European nations the ſmall fragment of learning which was at that time ſhut up within the walls of this metropolis. The diſcovery of printing was nearly contemporary with that event. Theſe two circumſtances greatly favoured the reformation of religion, which gave an irrecoverable ſhock to the empire of ſuperſtition and implicit obedience. From that time the moſt ſuperficial obſervation can trace the improvements of art and ſcience which may, without apparent

impropriety, be ſtiled inceſſant. Not to mention eſſential improvements which were wholly unknown to the ancients, the moſt important characteriſtic of modern literature is the extent of ſurface over which it is diffuſed, and the number of perſons that participate in it. It has ſtruck its roots deep, and there is no probability that it will ever be ſubverted. It was once the practice of moraliſts to extol paſt times, and declaim without bound on the degeneracy of mankind. But this faſhion is nearly exploded. The true ſtate of the fact is too groſs to be miſtaken. And, as improvements have long continued to be inceſſant, ſo there is no chance but they will go on. The moſt penetrating philoſophy cannot preſcribe limits to them, nor the moſt ardent imagination adequately fill up the proſpect.

Secondly, the doctrine of neceſſity teaches us that all things in the univerſe are connected together. Nothing could have happened otherwiſe than it has happened. Do we congratulate ourſelves upon the riſing genius of freedom? Do we view with pride the improvements of mankind, and contraſt with wonder, man in the ſtate in which he once was, naked, ignorant and brutal, with man as we now ſometimes behold him, enriched with boundleſs ſtores of ſcience, and penetrated with ſentiments of the pureſt philanthropy? Theſe things could not have exiſted in their preſent form without having been prepared by all the preceding events. Every thing the moſt ſeemingly inſignificant, the moſt loathſome, or the moſt retrogade, was indiſſolubly bound to all that we moſt admire in the proſpect before us. We may perhaps go a ſtep farther than this. The human mind is a principle of the ſimpleſt nature, a mere faculty of ſenſation or perception. It muſt have begun from abſolute ignorance; it muſt obtain its improvement by ſlow degrees; it muſt paſs through various ſtages of folly and miſtake. Such is, and could not but be, the hiſtory of mankind.

There are three conſiderations which limit that idea of optimiſm which ſome men have been inclined to deduce from the above circumſtances.

Firſt, it applies only to that part of the univerſe with which we are acquainted. That deduction, whatever it is, which is authoriſed by the above circumſtances, depends upon their junction. The general tendency to improvement would be an inſufficient apology for untoward events, if every thing were not connected; and the connection of all events would have no juſt tendency to reconcile us to the ſcene, were it not for the viſible improvement. But has improvement been the conſtant characteriſtic of the univerſe? The human ſpecies ſeems to be but, as it were, of yeſterday. Will it continue for ever? The globe we inhabit bears ſtrong marks of convulſion, ſuch as the teachers of religion, and the profeſſors of natural philoſophy agree to predict, will one day deſtroy the inhabitants of the earth. Viciſſitude therefore, rather than unbounded progreſs, appears to be the characteriſtic of nature.

Secondly, the quantity of good deducible from theſe circumſtances, inſtead of meriting the name of optimiſm, is in one reſpect directly contraſted with it. Nothing is poſitively beſt. So far from it, that the conſiderations here alleged are calculated to prove that every thing is valuable, for this reaſon among others, that it leads to ſomething better than itſelf.

Laſtly, the points here affirmed, are by no means calculated to bear out the concluſion that, if ſomething elſe had happened in the place of what did actually happen in any given inſtance, it might not have been a fortunate event. We are taught by the doctrine of neceſſity that nothing elſe could poſſibly happen under the circumſtances; not that, if ſomething elſe had been poſſible, it would not have been attended with more deſirable conſequences. Cæſar enſlaved his country; the event was unavoidable; and

the general progreſs of human improvement upon the whole went on, notwithſtanding this diſaſtrous occurrence. But, if it had been poſſible that Cæſar ſhould have been diverted from this deteſtable enterpriſe, if the republic could have been reſtored by the battle of Mutina or made victorious in the plains of Philippi, it might have been a moſt fortunate event for the whole race of mankind. There is a difficulty in conceiving that things ſhould have been in any reſpect otherwiſe than they are. It may be conjectured with much plauſibility that this is in all caſes impoſſible. But the conſideration of this affords no ground of rejoicing in untoward events. More auſpicious harbingers would have led to more extended improvements. As to what was ſtated of the ſimplicity of the human mind, it may be obſerved that the hiſtory of the ſpecies exhibits the united effects of this internal principle, and the ſtructure of the human body, as well as of the material univerſe. Brutes appear to have the ſame internal principle of perception that we have, but they have never made our progreſs. There may be other conſcious beings in exiſtence who poſſeſs the moſt eſſential advantages over us.

It may be worthy of remark, that the ſupport the ſyſtem of optimiſm derives from the doctrine of neceſſity is of a very equivocal nature. The doctrine of neceſſity teaches that each event is the only thing under the circumſtances that could happen; it would of conſequence be as proper, upon this ſyſtem, to ſay that every thing that happens is the worſt, as that it is the beſt, that could poſſibly happen.

It was obſerved, in the commencement of this diſcuſſion upon the ſubject of optimiſm, that, though there were ſome pain, or abſolute evil, which, relatively taken, muſt be admitted to be attended with an overbalence of good, yet it was a matter of great delicacy and difficulty in moſt inſtances to decide in fa-

vour of pain, which, whatever be its relative value, is certainly a negative quantity to be deducted in the ſum total of happineſs. There is perhaps ſome impropriety in the phraſe thus applied of relative good. Pain, under the moſt favourable circumſtances, muſt be admitted to be abſolutely, though not relatively, an evil. In every inſtance of this kind we are reduced to a choice of evils: conſequently, whichever way we determine our election, it is ſtill evil that we chooſe.

Taking theſe conſiderations along with us, the raſhneſs of the optimiſt will appear particularly glaring, while we recollect the vaſt portion of pain and calamity that is to be found in the world. Let us not amuſe ourſelves with a pompous and deluſive ſurvey of the whole, bet let us examine parts ſeverally and individually. All nature ſwarms with life. This may in one view afford an idea of an extenſive theatre of pleaſure. But unfortunately every animal preys upon his fellow. Every animal, however minute, has a curious and ſubtle ſtructure, rendering him ſuſceptible, as it ſhould ſeem, of piercing anguiſh. We cannot move our foot without becoming the means of deſtruction. The wounds inflicted are of a hundred kinds. Theſe petty animals are capable of palpitating for days in the agonies of death. It may be ſaid, with little licence of phraſeology, that all natures ſuffers. There is no day nor hour in which, in ſome regions of the many-peopled globe, thouſands of men and millions of animals are not tortured to the utmoſt extent that organiſed life will afford. Let us turn our attention to our own ſpecies. Let us ſurvey the poor, oppreſſed, hungry, naked, denied all the gratifications of life, and all that nouriſhes the mind. They are either tormented with the injuſtice, or chilled into lethargy. Let us view man writhing under the pangs of diſeaſe, or the fiercer tortures that are ſtored up for him by his brethren. Who is there that will look on, and ſay, "All this is well; there is no

evil in the world?" Let us recollect the pains of the mind; the loss of friends, the rankling tooth of ingratitude, the unrelenting rage of tyranny, the slow progress of justice, the brave and honest consigned to the fate of guilt. Let us plunge into the depth of dungeons. Let us observe youth languishing in hopeless despair, and talents and virtue shrouded in eternal oblivion. The evil does not consist merely in the pain endured. It is the injustice that inflicts it, that gives it its sharpest sting. Malignity, an unfeeling disposition, vengeance and cruelty, are inmates of every climate. As these are felt by the sufferer with peculiar acuteness, so they propagate themselves. Severity begets severity, and hatred engenders hate*. The whole history of the human species, taken in one point of view, appears a vast abortion. Man seems adapted for wisdom and fortitude and benevolence. But he has always, through a vast majority of countries, been the victim of ignorance and superstition. Contemplate the physiognomy of the species. Observe the traces of stupidity, of low cunning, of rooted insolence, of withered hope, and narrow selfishness, where the characters of wisdom, independence and disinterestedness might have been inscribed. Recollect the horrors of war, that last invention of deliberate profligacy for the misery of man. Think of the variety of wounds, the multiplication of anguish, the desolation of countries, towns destroyed, harvests flaming, inhabitants perishing by thousands, of hunger and cold.

A sound philosophy will teach us to contemplate this scene without madness. Instructed in its lessons, we shall remember that, though there is much of evil, there is also much of good in the world, much pleasure as well as much pain. We shall not even pronounce whether some small portion of this evil may not be relatively not an evil. Above all, we

* *Chap.* II.

ſhall be cheared with the thought of brighter proſpects and happier times. But the optimiſt muſt be particularly raſh, who takes upon him to affirm of all this maſs of evil without exception, that it is relatively not evil, and that nothing could have happened otherwiſe than it has happened, without the total being worſe than it is.

There is reaſon to think that the creed of optimiſm, or an opinion bearing ſome relation to that creed, has done much harm in the world.

It is calculated to overturn all diſtinction between virtue and vice. The eſſential part of theſe ideas, as has been already obſerved, conſiſts in the tendency of the actions ſo denominated with reſpect to the general good *. But, according to the doctrine of optimiſm, if I do a virtuous action, I contribute to the general good; and, if I do a vicious action, it is ſtill the ſame. Every man, according to this ſyſtem, is privileged, as the elect are privileged according to the ſyſtem of certain religioniſts: "he may live as he liſt, for he cannot commit ſin." Whether I murder my benefactor, or preſerve him from being murdered by another, I ſtill do the very beſt thing that could have been done or thought of.

It will be admitted on all hands that the conduct of a man may be ſuch as to produce evil and pain to himſelf, to involve him in perpetual obloquy and remorſe. It may be ſuch as to inflict intolerable pain and the moſt horrible miſchief upon another, or upon many others. A man therefore upon this ſcheme may reaſonably ſtudy his own intereſt, he may ſtudy the benefit and advantage of his friends or his neighbours. But, if he affect to ſtudy the good of the whole, he is only deceiving himſelf. It is impoſſible for him to have the ſlighteſt notion, what acts of an individual under any given circumſtances will or will not contribute to the general good. Nero, when he pronounced ſentence upon Lucan or Seneca,

* *Book* II, *Chap.* IV.

when he caſtrated Sporus, ſet fire to the city of Rome, or incloſing the Chriſtians in cloth of pitch, burned them by night after the manner of torches, adopted the conduct, though perhaps he was not aware of it, moſt aptly conducing to the happineſs of the whole. It is not indeed, abſolutely ſpeaking, indifferent what I ſhall do; but, practically ſpeaking, it is, ſince I am wholly unable to conjecture what will be beneficial or what injurious. We ſaw, upon the ſyſtem of ſelf-love, public utility reſulting from each man's determining to poſtpone that utility to his private advantage *; but it is much more abſurd and repulſive to ſuppoſe univerſal happineſs to be eſſentially promoted by the proſligacy, malevolence and miſery of innumerable multitudes.

But though optimiſm purſued into its conſequences is deſtructive of the diſtinction between virtue and vice, or rather teaches that there neither is nor can be ſuch a thing as vice, yet it is the fate of this, like many other errors, that the truths which lie undeveloped in the mind and cannot be deracinated, ſerve to check its influence and counteract its evil tendency.

It may however be ſuſpected that, while its pernicious effects are thus counteracted, they are not deſtroyed. It is unavoidable that men ſhould in ſome reſpects imitate what they perſuade themſelves is right. Thus in religion, thoſe perſons who believe that a large portion of mankind are objects of God's wrath and reſerved for eternal perdition, can never be prevailed on to regard with a true and genuine ſympathy thoſe whom God has curſed. In the ſame manner it will probably happen in the preſent caſe: thoſe who believe that all the unfortunate events and ſufferings that exiſt in the world, will be found in ſome myſterious way to have been the fitteſt inſtruments of univerſal good, are in danger of being leſs ſcrupulous than they

* *Chap.* X.

ought to be in the means they shall themselves select for the accomplishment of their purposes. If pain, horrors and devastation be frequently found means of kindness in the system of the universe, it is impossible to assign a good reason why they should not be such under the direction of man.

There is another crude notion diffused in the world, which the principle of optimism is calculated to encourage, and which the views here explained have a tendency to correct. It is not uncommon to congratulate ourselves upon the perverseness and misconduct of those whose views we oppose, under the imagination that such misconduct conduces to the more speedy subversion of error and establishment of justice. But the maxim is safer and better founded than this, which should instruct us that we "rejoice not in evil, but rejoice in the truth." It has already appeared, that it is a matter of great delicacy and difficulty to decide in favour of pain and calamity as the probable means of a preponderance of good. It was sufficiently seen, when we treated of resistance and revolutions, that the angry passions are not the most promising instruments of human happiness. A perverse conduct tends to the production of confusion and violence. A government that employed every species of persecution against those who should desire its reform, and that involved the country over which it presided in war, for the purpose of checking or exterminating sentiments of reason and equality, would do harm, and not good. It might indeed defeat its own purposes; but it would produce resentment and contention. It might excite a revulsion in the public mind against its designs; but this revulsion would be the offspring of irritation, and not of the understanding. Diminish the irritation, and the progress of real knowledge would be more substantial and salutary. Real knowledge is benevolent, not cruel and retailiating. The

change that grows up among any people from a calm conviction of the abſurdity of their former errors, is of the moſt admirable ſort; but the change that grows from diſtreſs, diſtemper and criſis, is an exploſion pregnant with fate to thouſands. From all theſe conſiderations it appears, that every departure from enormous vice ſhould be accounted as ſo much gained to the cauſe of general happineſs.

Let any perſon who entertains the contrary opinion, aſk himſelf, whether, if he had a part in the government we have ſuppoſed, he would think himſelf obliged to act in the manner in which he profeſſes to deſire the government ſhould act? If, as he imagines, that action be moſt conducive to the public good, moſt undoubtedly, were it his own caſe, he ought to adopt it. Again, would he adviſe or incite the government in any way to this perverſe conduct? There cannot be a clearer principle in morals, than "that the action it would be vice in us to adopt, it is vice in us to deſire to ſee adopted by another."

A farther conſequence that flows from theſe ſpeculations is relative to the perſecution and ſufferings to be endured by the advocates of juſtice. The ſame reaſoning that has perſuaded men to rejoice in beholding acts of oppoſition, has led them to court oppreſſion and martyrdom. A ſound philoſophy, it ſhould ſeem, would never inſtigate us to provoke the paſſions of others, or to regard injuſtice as the ſuitable means of public happineſs. It is reaſon and not anger, that will benefit mankind. Diſpaſſionate enquiry, not bitterneſs and reſentment, is the parent of reform. The wiſe man will avoid perſecution, becauſe a protracted life and an unfettered liberty are likely to enable him to produce a greater ſum of good. He will avoid perſecution, becauſe he will be unwilling to add fuel to the flames of contention. He will regret it when it arrives, becauſe he believes it to be both wicked and miſchievous. But he will not avoid it by the ſacrifice of a virtuous, but tempered, activity. He will not

regret it with a mean and puſillanimous ſpirit, but will meet it, when it can no longer be prevented, with that dignity of ſoul and tranquillity of temper that are characteriſtic of true wiſdom. He will not imagine, that the cauſe of truth will periſh, though he ſhould be deſtroyed. He will make the beſt of the ſituation to which he is reduced, and endeavour that his death, like his life, may be of uſe to mankind.

The following remarks may be added to thoſe in the note, p. 103, *upon the ſubject of* abſtract ideas.

The oppoſition which has been ſo ingeniouſly maintained againſt the doctrine of abſtract ideas, has chiefly turned upon the confounding ideas and images, and the ſuppoſing that we could have no perceptions, which were not characteriſed, like material objects, by dimenſion, figure and colour. The following view of the ſubject will perhaps ſerve to remove any ambiguity that might continue to reſt upon it.

Ideas, conſidering that term as comprehending all perceptions, both primary, or of the ſenſes, and ſecondary, or of the memory, may be divided into four claſſes, 1, perfect. The exiſtence of theſe has been denied (p. 103). 2. imperfect, ſuch as thoſe which are produced in us by a near and careful inſpection of any viſible object. 3. imperfect, ſuch as thoſe produced by a ſlight and diſtant view. 4. imperfect, ſo as to have no reſemblance to an image of any external object. The perception produced in us in ſlight and current diſcourſe by the words, river, houſe, field, are of this nature; and have no more reſemblance to the image of any viſible object, than the perception ordinarily produced in us by the words, conqueſt, government, virtue.

The ſubject of this laſt claſs of ideas is every ingeniouſly treated by Burke, in his Enquiry into the ſub-

blime, *Part* V. He has however committed one material error in the diſcuſſion, by repreſenting theſe as inſtances of the employment of "words without ideas." If we recollect that brutes have ſimilar abſtractions, and a general conception, of the female of their own ſpecies, of man, of food, of the ſmart of a whip, &c. we ſhall probably admit that ſuch perceptions (and in all events they are perceptions, or, according to the eſtabliſhed language upon the ſubject, ideas) are not neceſſarily connected with the employment of words.

END OF VOL. I.

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